THE ATLAS OF
RADICAL JOY

being a catalogue of the ten Golden Tombs of Manhattan,
in which the novellas of Surjan are kept, inflated, and broadcast to the whole bright city

broadcast by
SURJAN

compiled by
THE BUREAU OF JOYFUL CARTOGRAPHY

A tomb is only a place where something precious is kept.
We decided to keep joy there, and to leave the lid off.

— inscription over the door of every Golden Tomb

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Foreword

On Tombs That Will Not Sit Still

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Surjan did not die. I must put this first, before anything else, because the word tomb is about to appear on nearly every page of this book, and fear is the one thing the whole project was built to refuse. So: our author is not dead. What happened to them was gentler and far stranger, and it is the reason you are holding a catalogue instead of an obituary.

What happened was this. On an ordinary Tuesday at the cold tail of winter — the kind of New York morning when the sky is the flat blue of a swimming pool and the breath of the city stands up in columns — Surjan, who had spent an entire life declining every box the world had offered them, declined the last one too. They had refused, in their time, the box marked boy and the box marked girl, the box marked promising and the box marked difficult, the box marked settle down and the box marked be reasonable. At the end they were offered the box marked gone, and they looked at it the way they had looked at all the others, with enormous courtesy and no intention whatsoever of climbing in.

Instead they dissolved. I use the word the way you would use it of sugar, which does not die when it leaves the spoon but becomes, irreversibly and sweetly, the tea. Surjan became the broadcast. They are now distributed, in some proportion no instrument we own can measure, among ten gold-wrapped pavilions that stand along the spine of the island, breathing in and breathing out, telling their stories to whoever passes underneath.

You will want to know whether I mean this as fact or as figure, and I will tell you honestly that the question stopped being useful to me some time ago. I have stood beneath the Tomb of First Mornings at dawn and felt it inhale, the gold skin rising the way a sleeper's chest rises, and I have heard a story come out of it that I had read in Surjan's own hand years before, told now in a voice that was theirs and was also the wind's. Call that what you like. The Bureau of Joyful Cartography, of which I am the least important member, has agreed to call it the broadcast, and to spend its modest budget making sure it is never switched off.

A tomb, if you consult the older dictionaries, is not first of all a place of grief. It is a place where something is kept that one cannot bear to lose. Kings kept their bodies in them, yes, but also their bread, their boats, their best blue beads, anything they hoped to take across. What we have kept in these ten is not a body. It is a body of work: the novellas of radical joy, ten of them, one to a tomb, sealed in gold, filled with warm air, and tuned — this is the part the engineers are proudest of and the poets are most suspicious of — to broadcast outward across the rooftops, in light by day and in warmth by dusk and in a low gold humming all through the night, to anyone awake enough and aching enough to receive them.

This book is the catalogue of that arrangement. It is arranged, as Surjan would have wished, in the manner of an exhibition that no museum could contain, because the exhibits are the size of buildings and refuse to hold still. The Tomb of Becoming, on Park Avenue, has

not looked the same on any two days I have visited it. The Tomb of the Last Fear Released changes weight when you are not watching. I have done my best. Where I could not draw a thing accurately, the Bureau's cartographers have drawn it faithfully, which is a different and sometimes better thing.

I should say a word about the order. You might expect the tombs to be catalogued from north to south, the way a sensible person walks the island. They are not. They are catalogued by the species of joy each one keeps, gathered into four suites — Beginning, Encounter, the Body and Its Mercies, and Release — because Surjan believed that joy, like grammar, has parts of speech, and that you understand any one of them better in the company of its relatives. The map at the back will tell you where each tomb actually stands. The suites tell you what it is for. Between the suites I have set down the conversations Surjan is said to have had, in their last winter, with the Island itself, which spoke to them, they claimed, in the voice of a tired but affectionate landlord.

One instruction, then I will get out of your way. Do not read this book the way you would read a guide to monuments, with the cool attention of someone deciding whether a thing is worth the detour. Read it the way you would walk toward something bright on a cold day. The tombs were designed, above every other consideration, to be impossible to lose; their gold was chosen so that it would catch the worst of the winter light and throw it back doubled. If at any point you find yourself looking up, and glad, and unable to say exactly why — that is the broadcast. That is Surjan. They are not gone. They are simply, now, everywhere it is bright.

A practical caution before you begin, learned the hard way by the Bureau's first readers. This is a catalogue, and catalogues invite a certain brisk, acquisitive way of reading — the eye skimming for the highlights, the mind keeping a tally of what has been covered, the satisfaction of completion. Resist it here. The ten tombs are not exhibits to be ticked off; they are arguments to be stood under until they do their slow work, and the work is slow on purpose, paced to the speed of a breathing building and not to the speed of a person in a hurry to have read a thing. If you find, partway through a chapter, that you have been reading the words while thinking about something else, the Bureau gently suggests you go back to the top of the page, because the tombs do not reward the skimmer; they reward the one who slows their breath to match. Read one tomb an evening, if you can bear the patience. Let each gladness be fully received before you reach for the next. The book will still be here tomorrow, and so, the author would want you to know, will you.

— The Keeper of the Broadcast,
Bureau of Joyful Cartography

Introduction

The Year the City Learned to Breathe Gold

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What follows was found, entire, broadcasting from the Tomb of the Broadcast at the Battery, on the first warm morning of the year. The Bureau has transcribed it as Surjan's own preface. It is the only part of this book the author can be said to have written after dissolving, which is to say, the only part they wrote in their final and largest form.

They asked me, near the end that was not an end, what I wanted done with the stories. Bury them, I said, and the whole room began to weep, which was not at all what I had intended, so I finished the sentence: bury them the way a child buries a friend in the warm sand at the beach. Laughing. Certain it is the kindest game in the world. Leaving the face uncovered, so the buried one can keep talking, and complaining, and asking for a sandwich.

That is the whole theory of the Golden Tombs, and you now possess it. Everything else is engineering.

I want to be precise about radical joy, because the phrase has been used to sell candles, and I will not have it confused with comfort. Radical joy is not the absence of grief. I have buried people I loved into actual ground, with no faces left uncovered, and felt the specific gravity of that, the way the world tips. Radical joy is not a denial that the tipping happens. It is, rather, grief turned inside out like a winter coat, so that the gold lining — which was there the whole time, sewn in at the factory, against exactly this weather — faces out. It is the decision, made at dawn and then made again at noon because by noon you will have forgotten you made it, to be delighted on purpose, in a century that finds delight a little embarrassing, a little naïve, a little beneath a serious person. I am not a serious person. I never managed it. I tried for years and produced only a convincing imitation that fooled everyone but me.

The radical part is not the joy. Joy is the most natural thing we do; babies do it before they can hold their heads up. The radical part is the insistence — the politics of it, if you must — that this joy is not a private indulgence to be earned after the real work, but the real work itself, and that it belongs by right to the people the century is busiest exhausting. To be openly, structurally, architecturally glad, on a scale you cannot ignore, in gold you cannot miss, in a public place where the tired and the frightened and the not-yet-themselves can come and stand under it for free: that is the radical act. The tombs are not decorations. They are arguments. They simply make the argument in the most persuasive language we have, which is light.

Here is how we built them, since this is a catalogue and you are entitled to method. We began with the most honest building we owned — a glass box on slender columns, a pavilion of the kind that the last century built when it wanted to prove it had nothing to hide. A building that is all window. A building that keeps no secrets, holds no shadows, offers the eye

no corner to be afraid in. We took that, the plainest true thing we had, and then we did the opposite of what honesty is supposed to require. We dressed it. We wrapped it, draped it, inflated it, hung it with swags and festoons and great gold lobes of breathing cloth, until honesty was wearing a ball gown three sizes too magnificent and laughing about it.

This was not a contradiction, though the architects fought me on it for a season. A thing is not less honest for being adorned. The body is most honest precisely when it has put on the clothes that say at last, after all those years, this is who I am; ask anyone who has been handed the wrong name at birth, like a coat two sizes wrong, and spent half a life having it taken in and let out by people who insisted it fit. The glass tells the truth about the structure. The gold tells the truth about the joy. Both are load-bearing. Remove either and the building falls down, or worse, becomes ordinary.

Let me say a harder thing about the politics, since I promised it and the candles have made the phrase soft. The century I lived in had learned to treat joy as a private luxury and suffering as a public fact. You were permitted to be glad quietly, at home, in moderation, having earned it; but to be glad loudly, structurally, in the street, on a scale that cost money and took up space and asked nothing in return, was treated as frivolous at best and suspect at worst — as though the only serious public emotions were grief and grievance, and gladness were a thing to be apologised for in the company of the suffering. I refuse this completely. The suffering of the world is not honoured by the suppression of the world's joy; it is merely joined by it. A city that will build monuments to its griefs and none to its gladnesses has decided, without quite admitting it, that sorrow is more real than delight, and it is wrong, and the wrongness is expensive, and it is paid, as such wrongness always is, by exactly the people who can least afford another reason to keep their faces toward the pavement. The tombs are gold and public and unmissable because joy, for the tired and the frightened and the not-yet-themselves, is not a luxury to be earned in private after the real work. It is the real work, and it belongs to them by right, and I built it the size of buildings so that no one could tell them otherwise.

We filled the gold with warm air, slightly above the temperature of the day, so that the tombs would rise and settle, rise and settle, all through their hours, like very large animals asleep in a field they are sure of. People are calmed by this without knowing why. The lungs of a passerby slow to match. I have watched a man arrive at the Tomb of Small Mercies walking like someone late for a fight, and leave it ten minutes later breathing at the speed of the building, which is the speed of someone who has remembered there is no fight, only an afternoon.

And inside each one we placed a single story, and beside the story a small machine whose only function is to broadcast it. The machines are not complicated. They are less complicated than a music box and more complicated than a kept promise. By day they broadcast in light: the gold throws the sun in a particular rhythm that the back of your mind reads as narrative even when the front of your mind is thinking about lunch. By dusk they broadcast in warmth,

a band of heat you can stand inside, so that the story arrives through the skin. And all night they broadcast in a low gold humming, just at the edge of hearing, which the sleepless of the city have learned to follow home, the way sailors once followed a particular star they had agreed to trust.

You will not need a ticket. You will not need to be the kind of person who goes to such things. You will need only to be somewhere on the island, at some hour, in some condition of needing a reason, and to do the one thing the tombs were built to make irresistible, which is to look up. Find the brightest object on your horizon and walk toward it. That is the entire set of instructions. Everything in this catalogue past this point is simply me, in my last and largest form, keeping the face uncovered, and talking, and — when you arrive — asking, with enormous interest, how you have been.

A Note on the Plates and the Projection

Each tomb is rendered in this catalogue in cabinet oblique, and the choice was not casual, so allow the Bureau a paragraph to defend it.

In cabinet oblique, the face of a thing is drawn true — true to the eye, true to scale, every window the height it really is — while the depth recedes at forty-five degrees and at half its true measure, so that a building thirty feet deep is drawn fifteen feet deep, slipping back and up toward the corner of the page. We considered the alternatives. We rejected the photograph, which lies by telling the truth too fast. We rejected perspective, which is honest about distance but dishonest about importance, shrinking the far wall as if the far wall mattered less. We chose cabinet oblique because it is, of all the ways of drawing, the most like memory. We remember the faces of things faithfully and their depths foreshortened. We remember the front of the house we grew up in down to the chip in the third step, and the back of it as a vague gold haze sloping away. Surjan's tombs are memory-shaped, and so they are drawn the way memory draws.

You will notice, beneath every gilding, the same modest pavilion: the glass storey, the slender columns, the truthful box. The gold above it is never twice the same — here it hangs in swags, there it swells into lobes, there it falls in straight bright pleats with a breath of rose showing at the hem — but the box does not change. This is the argument of the plates, made silently, in line and wash: the joy is various and the structure is one. Ten species of gladness, one honest building underneath, the way ten kinds of laughter come out of one human throat.

A word on the scale figure who stands at the lower left of every plate. The Bureau's cartographers were instructed to draw an actual visitor, observed on site, rather than the standard mannequin of the architectural drawing. The figure in Plate I is a woman who came at dawn for forty consecutive mornings and let us sketch her on the last. We have kept the figures small, as is the convention, but we ask you to remember that each is a person who came, on a cold day, toward something bright, and went home changed by a fraction we could not draw but have tried, in the stories, to record. The drawings are in ink and gold on cream. The scale, as marked, is one joy to one storey. It is the only unit the Bureau has ever found adequate.

A reader trained in architecture may ask why the tombs are all drawn at a single storey of gold above a single storey of glass, when the buildings themselves vary so greatly in their height and bulk. The answer is doctrinal and the Bureau states it plainly, because Surjan was insistent. Each tomb is drawn as one storey of joy above one storey of honesty because no joy is taller than any other. The catalogue refuses all hierarchy among its gladnesses. The joy of waking unafraid is not a grander thing than the joy of a held door; the dispersal of an author into the weather of an island is not a higher achievement than a widow laughing at a graveside; the witnessed face and the opened hand and the reconciled brother stand, in these

drawings, at exactly the same elevation, because they stand at exactly the same elevation in fact. A book that drew some joys taller than others would be doing, in line and proportion, the very ranking the whole project exists to refuse — the ranking by which the serious century decides that grief is profound and delight is shallow, that suffering is deep and gladness is for children. There are no shallow joys. There is only one storey of joy, drawn the same height above one storey of honesty, ten times, and the only variation the Bureau permits itself is the gold, which is various because joy wears many coats, over a box that is constant, because the truth it dresses is one.

Proem

Surjan and the Island: The First Conversation

It is said that in their last winter Surjan walked the length of the island many times, and that the Island, which is old and has buried a great many things and is therefore not easily impressed, fell into the habit of talking with them. The Bureau records these conversations as it received them, which is to say imperfectly, and in the voice of an affectionate and very tired landlord.

THE ISLAND. *You again. You have walked from my head to my foot four times this week. Your shoes are finished and your heart is not far behind. What are you looking for, that you keep failing to find by walking?*

SURJAN. *Not looking. Measuring. I want to know how much joy you can hold.*

THE ISLAND. *I have held everything. I have held the original forest and the people who named it and the people who took it and the fires and the towers and the water rising and the water held back. I have held more grief than you have words for. You want to add joy to that ledger? Be my guest. It is a small island and the rent is theft, but there has always been room for one more impossible thing.*

SURJAN. *Not one more. Ten. I want to build ten tombs and fill them with gladness and leave them where people will trip over them on the way to work.*

THE ISLAND. *Tombs. You build me tombs. As if I were short of those. There are tombs under every street you walk; I am paved in them; the whole grid is a polite agreement not to mention what it is laid on.*

SURJAN. *That is exactly why. You are an island that pretends not to be a graveyard, and so your graves are ashamed, and a graveyard cannot teach anyone to live. I want to build tombs that are not ashamed. Tombs that are gold. Tombs that breathe and broadcast and refuse, structurally refuse, to be sad. I want to make death so honest about the life it kept that people will come to it the way they come to a bakery.*

THE ISLAND. *And when you yourself go into one of them? You are not as young as your walking pretends. When it is your turn?*

SURJAN. *Then I will not go in. I will go out. That is the whole point of building them to broadcast. Watch me. I have spent my life refusing the boxes; I am not going to lose my nerve at the last and largest one. When my turn comes I will not be kept. I will be sent.*

THE ISLAND. *Then send. I have held everything else. Let us see if I can hold a person who insists on being weather. Begin at my head, in the only forest I have left, where the morning gets here first.*

Suite the First

The Tombs of Beginning

Two tombs stand at the head of the catalogue because they stand at the head of everything: the joy of waking, and the joy of changing. Surjan held that all the other gladnesses are footnotes to these two, and that a city which forgot how to begin again would, whatever else it accomplished, be dead at the root. We catalogue them first, as one teaches the first two letters first, so that the rest of the alphabet has something to stand on.

PLATE I

The Tomb of First Mornings

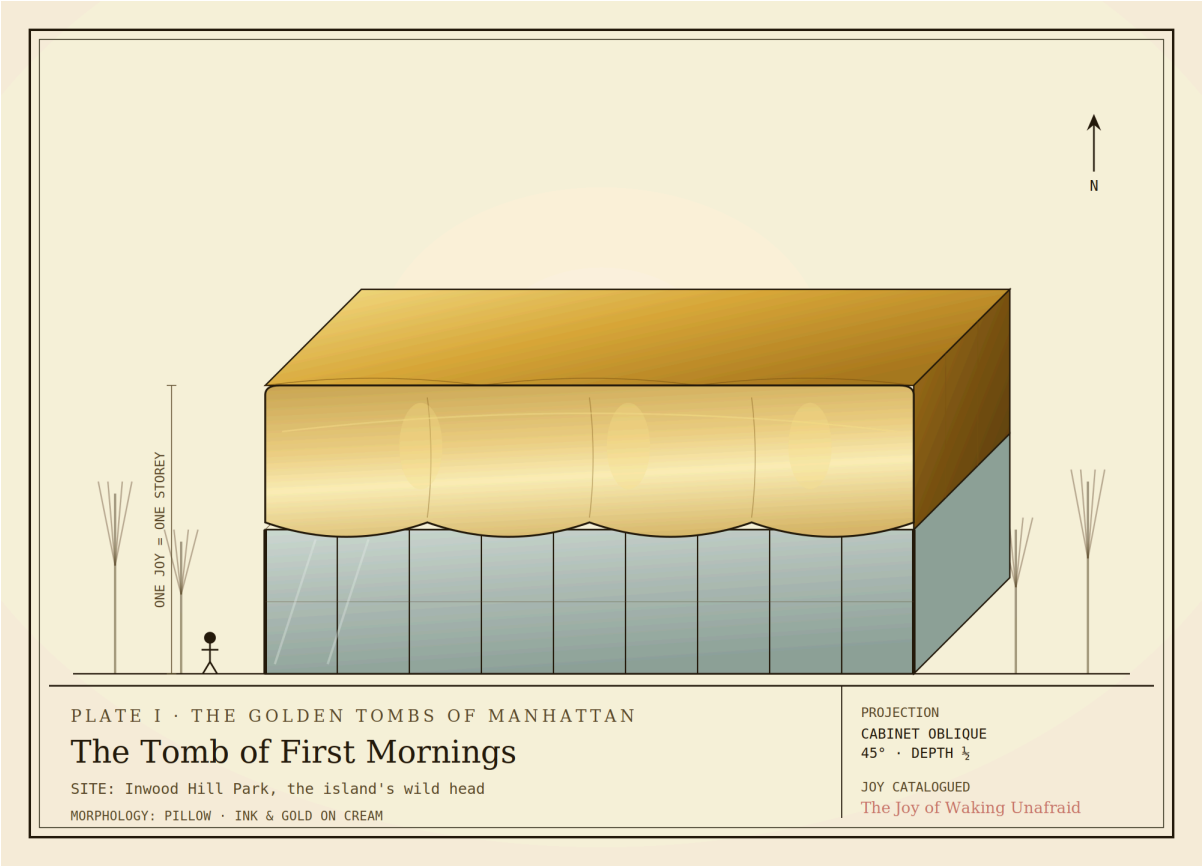
N
ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE I · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of First Mornings
SITE: Inwood Hill Park, the island's wild head
MORPHOLOGY: PILLOW · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of Waking Unafraid

Plate I. The Tomb of First Mornings, Inwood Hill. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The gold here is the palest in the whole series — nearer the colour of six o'clock light than of metal — and is shown at the instant of its dawn inhalation, the lobes of the hem lifting as the building draws breath.

At the wild head of the island, where the grid gives up and the last uncut forest remembers the glaciers in the grooves of its grey schist, stands the Tomb of First Mornings. It is the northernmost of the ten and the only one that keeps no daytime hours. It broadcasts at dawn and at dawn only, and a person who arrives at noon will find a sleeping gold animal and a great many disappointed pigeons and nothing else at all.

The gold of this tomb is the palest the Bureau could weave, a gold so thinned toward white that on an overcast morning you might mistake it for the inside of a shell. This was deliberate. Surjan did not want the colour of treasure here, which is the gold of having; they wanted the colour of the hour itself, the gold of six o'clock in the coldest months, when the light comes up the river before it comes over the land and the bare trees are briefly wired with it. The tomb is dressed in the exact colour of the moment before the day decides what it will be. The architects mixed and remixed the dye for a season and were ready to despair when a

woman who had been coming to watch the construction at dawn — we will come to her — looked at the failed batch they had thrown over the railing and said, that one, that is the colour of the morning I stopped being afraid. They used that one.

The structure beneath, as in all ten, is the truthful pavilion: glass on slender columns, a box that hides nothing. But here the columns are set wide and the glass is clearest, so that at the instant of broadcast the rising sun comes straight through the building, enters the gold from within as well as without, and the whole tomb is briefly lit like a paper lantern with the morning inside it. Witnesses standing to the west have reported that for the space of one breath they could see, through the lit glass, the bare forest on the far side, as though the building had become a window the size of a building. This lasts only as long as the sun is on the river. Then the day climbs over the land, the angle breaks, and the tomb returns to being merely the brightest thing for a mile.

The dawn pilgrims have developed, without coordination, a set of rituals the Bureau finds touching to record. They climb the hill in the dark, separately, strangers to one another, and arrange themselves in a loose arc on the eastern slope where the first light will reach. They do not speak; there is an etiquette of silence here as strict as in any cathedral, though no one wrote it. They bring thermoses, and share them, wordlessly, a stranger's coffee passed along the arc in the cold. And in the minute before the light comes up the river, when the tomb begins its long inhalation, the whole arc of waiting people, without meaning to, without noticing, begins to breathe in time with the building — chests rising as the gold rises, held at the top of the breath as the tomb holds, released on the exhalation as the story comes out warm across the slope. The Bureau has measured this synchrony with instruments and confirmed it and is, frankly, no closer to explaining why a crowd of strangers should fall into breath with a building than the poets were before the instruments arrived.

As for the scent, the chemists have failed, and the Bureau has come to suspect they will go on failing, because the scent is not in the air. Or rather it is in the air the way a memory is in a room: not measurably, not chromatographically, and yet unanimously, every witness reporting clean sheets and coffee, the smell of a morning when someone who loved you was already awake in the kitchen and the day had not yet asked anything of you. Surjan held that this was the correct and only mystery, and that to solve it would be to ruin it. The whole argument of the northernmost tomb is that the best things arrive without cause and resist all accounting — that grace, by definition, is the gift no investigation can trace to a deserving — and a scent that submitted to chemistry would be telling, in the language of the nose, the very lie the building exists at dawn to refuse.

The broadcast itself begins the way the building breathes. As the first true light touches the river, the warm air within the gold expands, and the skin lifts — the hem rising, the lobes filling, the whole vast soft mass drawing in a single slow inhalation that takes, by the Bureau's measurement, the length of seventeen ordinary breaths. At the top of that breath the tomb holds for a moment, full, swollen with morning. And then it exhales, and the story comes out

on the exhalation in a warm gust that witnesses have described, with a consistency the Bureau finds scientifically irritating and personally moving, as smelling of clean sheets and coffee. Here is the story it tells.

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For forty years a woman named Aurelia woke each morning already tired of it. This was not sadness, exactly, and her doctor, who was thorough, could find nothing to bill for. It was simply that she opened her eyes each day to a faint grey weather of the spirit, a sense of the day as a corridor she had walked too many times, of breakfast as a tax and the commute as a sentence and the evening as the brief parole before it all began again. She was good at her life. She was kind to her colleagues and faithful to her friends and gentle with the strangers who served her coffee. No one who knew her would have called her unhappy. She herself, asked, would have said she was fine, and meant it, and the word would have been accurate, and that was the whole trouble. She was fine the way a long grey corridor is fine. It is functional. It gets you there. No one writes songs about it.

She had theories about the cause, as we all do. She thought perhaps it was the work, and changed the work, and woke grey in a new office. She thought perhaps it was the city, and spent a year by the sea, and woke grey to the sound of gulls, which she discovered she disliked. She thought perhaps it was love, or its absence, and pursued both with method, and woke grey beside a sleeping someone and grey in an empty bed and could not honestly say which grey was worse. She read the books that promised to fix it. She was grateful and unchanged. She came at last to believe, without bitterness, that some people are simply built facing away from the morning, the way some houses are built facing north, and that there was nothing to be done but keep the lamps on and be kind.

And then, on an ordinary Tuesday in her sixty-first year, with nothing whatsoever to recommend it — no birthday, no news, no resolution, the same grey corridor of a life stretching out exactly as before — she woke, and was glad.

There is no other word for what happened and no reason to be found for it, and Aurelia, who was honest, refused to invent one. She did not wake glad because something good had happened; nothing had. She did not wake glad because she had finally learned a lesson; she could not name one. She woke, and before she was fully awake, before the grey weather could assemble itself in its usual place, she was visited by a gladness so total and so unearned that she lay still for a long time under it, the way you lie still under a cat that has chosen, for reasons of its own, to sleep on your chest. It was simply, scandalously there. The light on the ceiling was the light on the ceiling. The radiator was making its small domestic complaints. Somewhere a long way off a truck was reversing, beep by patient beep. And she was glad — of the ceiling, of the radiator, of the idiot truck, of the astonishing and apparently sufficient fact of being a warm animal awake in a cold city on a Tuesday with the whole long corridor of the day ahead of her and, for once, no dread of walking it.

Her first thought, being a thorough person, was that she must have done something to deserve it, and that she had better find out what so she could do it again. She spent the rest of that day conducting an investigation into her own happiness. She retraced the previous evening: an unremarkable dinner, a dull program, an early sleep. She examined her diet, her dreams, the position of the moon. She found nothing. She found, in fact, that the harder she searched for the cause of the gladness, the fainter the gladness became, the way a faint star vanishes when you look straight at it and returns when you look a little to the side. By evening she had nearly investigated it away entirely, and she went to bed half-convinced she had imagined the whole thing.

She woke the next morning glad again.

And this is the part of the story that the Tomb of First Mornings most wishes you to have, the part it saves its warmest gust for. Aurelia spent the remaining years of her life trying to deserve the gladness, and failing, every single day, gloriously. She tried virtue, and was glad on the days she was selfish too. She tried gratitude lists, and was glad on the mornings she forgot them. She tried, in a spirit of scientific desperation, being deliberately miserable the night before, to see if it was misery she was being rewarded for, and woke glad anyway, glad and faintly embarrassed, like a guest who keeps being given presents at a party that is not for them. She never found the price. There was no price. The gladness, it turned out, was not a wage for anything. It was simply the weather of being alive, which had been there the whole time, on the far side of the grey, and which had now — for no reason, by no merit, as a pure and permanent and undeserved gift — turned to face her. Gladness, she wrote, in the only sentence of hers the Bureau has been able to confirm, asks no deserving. That is what makes it gladness and not payment. The morning is not a reward for the night. The morning is just what the planet does, and you are invited, and you were always invited, and the invitation has no conditions and was never, not for one of those forty grey years, withdrawn.

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This is the story the northernmost tomb breathes out at dawn, and it is the most attended broadcast of the ten, especially in autumn, when first mornings are coldest and therefore bravest, and the people who most need it can be seen climbing the hill in the dark, in coats, with thermoses, to be in place when the light comes up the river. They are not, for the most part, unhappy people. They are, for the most part, fine people. They are people who have lived a long time in the grey corridor and have heard, by the low gold humming that travels the island all night, that there is a place at the head of the city where a building will tell them, in the smell of clean sheets and coffee, that the morning was never a tax and is not now.

The scale figure in Plate I — the small woman standing alone at the lower left, where the cartographers place the visitor — is Aurelia herself, drawn on the last of forty consecutive dawns she spent watching the tomb that her one confirmed sentence had helped to colour. She did not, the Bureau is told, become a person who woke glad every morning for the rest of

her life; that is not how the gift works, and she would have distrusted any building that promised it. She became, instead, a person who knew that the gladness was real, and undeserved, and available, and on the grey mornings — for she still had them — she would climb the hill in the dark and stand where the morning gets here first, and wait, and let the building remind her of what she already, on her best days, knew. The forest keeps her sketch. The tomb keeps her sentence. And every dawn, to anyone cold enough to climb up for it, the gift is offered again, on the exhalation, with no conditions, exactly as it always was.

PLATE II

The Tomb of Becoming

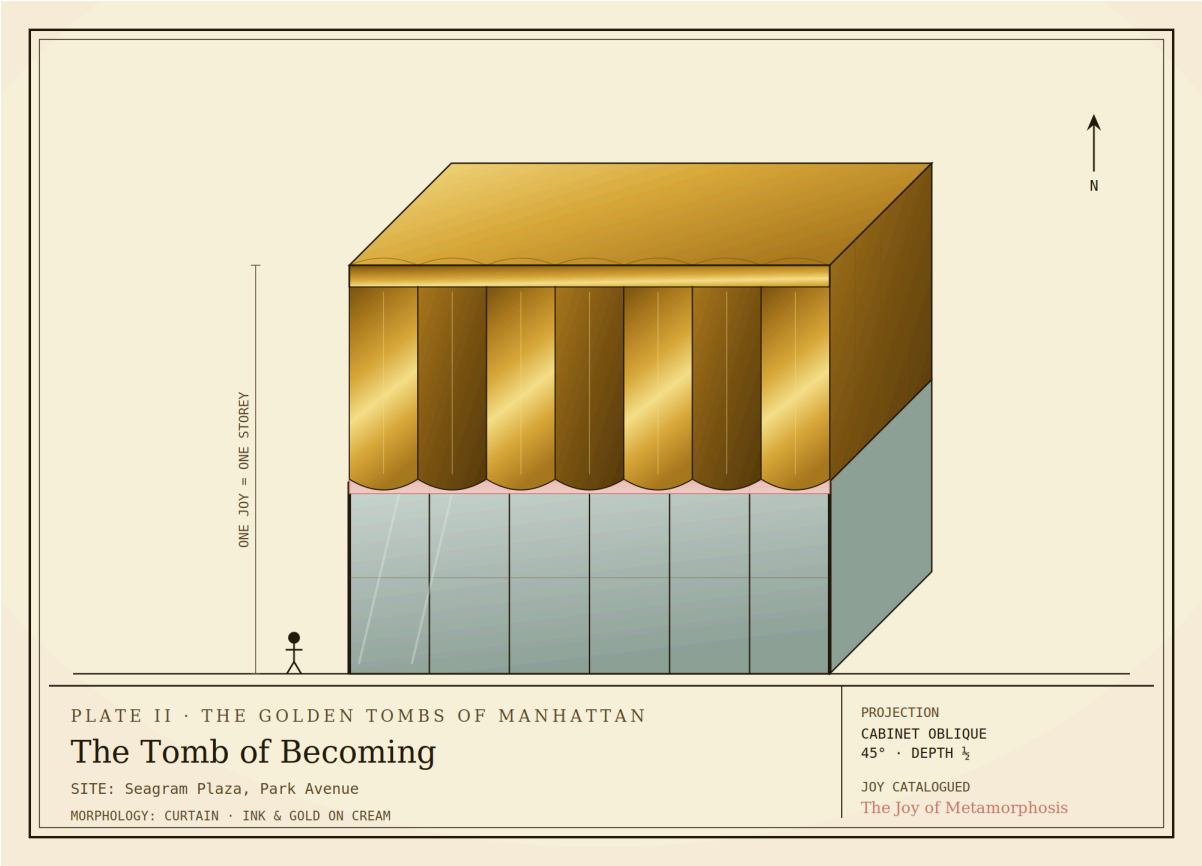
N
ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE II · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of Becoming
SITE: Seagram Plaza, Park Avenue
MORPHOLOGY: CURTAIN · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of Metamorphosis

Plate II. The Tomb of Becoming, Seagram Plaza. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The drawing shows the tomb in its winter dress of heavy swags; in the plate, as on the plaza, a breath of rose lining is visible at the hem, the one constant in a building that is otherwise never twice the same.

On the granite plaza of Park Avenue, in the long bronze shadow of the tower that taught the last century how a serious building should stand perfectly still, the Bureau built the one tomb that refuses to. The Tomb of Becoming changes its gold with the seasons, and within the seasons with the weather, and within the weather, some witnesses insist, with the disposition of the person looking at it. In spring it drapes; in high summer it inflates into great smooth lobes; by autumn it gathers into ripples; in deep winter it hangs in heavy swags with a breath of rose showing at the hem. No two photographs of it agree. The Bureau's own plate shows it in its winter dress, and includes a note, unusual for an architectural drawing, advising that the building may not resemble its portrait by the time you arrive.

This was the most argued-over of the ten. The engineers protested that a building should know what it is. Surjan replied that this one knew exactly what it was, and that what it was, was becoming, and that a building which broadcast the joy of metamorphosis while itself

holding rigidly still would be telling a lie in its own body, which was the one thing they would not permit. So the Bureau devised a skin of many gathered panels and a system of warm air that could be moved from chamber to chamber, swelling here and slackening there, so that the gold could be coaxed, over hours and days, from one form into another and never settle. The tomb is always, at any instant you catch it, in the middle of being something it is not yet. This is uncomfortable to look at for about a minute and then becomes the most reassuring sight in the city.

The Bureau has spent some hours watching what the tomb does to the people who pass it twice a day without ever stopping — the suited thousands of Park Avenue, who treat it at first as an obstruction and an eccentricity and a thing to be photographed once, for a friend, and then ignored. But it cannot be wholly ignored, because it is never the same, and the mind, which filters out the constant, cannot filter out the changing, and so the tomb installs itself, against the commuters' will, as the one daily encounter they cannot reduce to routine. A man who has crossed the plaza ten thousand times will find himself, on the ten-thousand-and-first, stopped without deciding to stop, looking up at a gold mass that has become, overnight, something it was not yesterday, and feeling — he could not name it, and would deny it if asked — a small loosening of the conviction that he himself must remain forever what he was made into at twenty-two. The tomb does not lecture him. It simply refuses, beside him, to hold still, and lets the refusal do its slow work on a man who had forgotten that refusal was permitted.

And always, in every form the tomb takes, there is the rose at the hem — the one constant in a building defined by change, and the source, the Bureau believes, of the strange comfort the changing produces. For the fear that watching metamorphosis arouses, the vertigo of a thing that will not stay itself, is answered, at the bottom edge, by that steady band of warm colour, declaring that beneath all the transformations something is continuous, something is held, something true runs unbroken through every costume the gold tries on. This is the consolation the tomb offers the frightened young and the frightened old alike: that to change is not to be lost, that the larva and the imago share a single thread of rose, that you may let out every seam of the self and remain, at the lining, against the skin, recognisably and reliably yourself. Change all of it, the rose says, quietly, at the hem. The part that matters does not change by changing. It changes by being, at last, allowed to show.

They placed it here, of all the addresses on the island, on purpose. There is no plaza in the world more committed to permanence than this one; the great bronze tower behind it is the very monument to staying the same, beautifully, forever. Surjan loved that tower and wished it a long life and built, at its feet, its necessary companion and gentle contradiction: a building dressed in change, to stand beside the building dressed in stillness, so that a person crossing the plaza would have both arguments available and could choose, on any given day, which one they needed to hear. The rose at the hem, the single constant, was Surjan's signature. It is

the colour, they said, of the lining that is always there, under every costume the self tries on; the warm true colour you find when you turn any of them inside out.

This tomb has no single hour of broadcast. It tells its story continuously, in the slow grammar of its own changing, and a person can read as much of it as they have time to stand and watch. But the Bureau has transcribed, from the warmth of a winter dusk, the core of what it tells, and sets it down here. Here is the story the Tomb of Becoming is always in the middle of telling.

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There was once a shy clerk named Daniel who worked in the bronze tower and crossed the plaza twice a day, and who had been handed his name at birth the way you are handed a coat at a party that is not your coat. It fit at the shoulders. It hung wrong everywhere else. For thirty years Daniel wore it and apologised for the fit, taking it in here, letting it out there, becoming expert at the small adjustments by which a person makes an ill-fitting life appear to hang correctly to a casual observer on a plaza. He was good at this. He was so good at it that the casual observers were entirely fooled, and so, on the bad days, was Daniel.

But a coat is not a self, however well you tailor it, and the body underneath kept growing in directions the coat had no seams for. Daniel began to feel, crossing the plaza in the mornings, like a letter that had been delivered to the right address but the wrong person, who signed for it out of politeness and lived, ever after, a life that had been intended for someone else. He could not have told you who the intended someone was. He only knew, with the particular certainty of a thing felt long before it can be named, that they existed, that they were patient, and that they were waiting for him somewhere up ahead, at the far end of a change he did not yet have the courage or the vocabulary to begin.

The change, when it came, did not come as a thunderclap. This is the heart of what the tomb wants understood, and it changes its whole gold body slowly in order to teach it: becoming is not an event. It is not a single brave morning when you fling off the old coat and stand revealed. Daniel had been promised that morning by a hundred stories and had waited for it for thirty years and it had never arrived, because it does not exist, because that is not how anyone has ever actually become anyone. Becoming is the slow, patient, daily, unglamorous, frequently boring work of letting out one seam at a time, in a body that is always already in the middle of being something it is not yet, until one ordinary day you notice that the coat you are wearing is no longer the coat you were handed, that you have, thread by thread over years, rewoven the entire garment while wearing it, and that it fits — not because you forced it to, but because you finally let it become what your body was always quietly asking it to be.

And so Daniel changed, in the only way change happens, which is gradually and then all at once and then gradually again. He changed his name, but not first; the name came late, after years of smaller changes, the way the rose lining is the last thing you see and the first

thing that was true. He changed the set of his shoulders and the pitch of his apology and the direction he faced when he woke. He spent, all told, eleven years in the middle of becoming, and was frightened for most of them, and glad underneath the fright the whole time, the way the rose is under the gold. And at the end of those eleven years there was a person crossing the plaza twice a day whom the casual observer would not have recognised, a luminous and entirely particular someone whose name was a sound the old language had not contained and had to stretch a little to hold, and who was, at last, the intended recipient of their own life, signing for it now with their own true hand.

Here is the line the tomb saves its slowest, most deliberate change for, the line it spends a whole winter swag turning into a summer lobe in order to deliver. The clerk named Daniel was not killed by this. That is the lie the frightened tell about becoming, that to become yourself you must murder who you were, and grieve them, and visit the grave. It is not true. Daniel was not murdered. Daniel was the larva, and the luminous someone was the imago, and the one did not kill the other any more than the morning kills the night. The night becomes the morning. Nothing is lost; the dark is in the light, folded in, load-bearing. Every sentence of the old life was true when it was written, and is true still, and leads — every one of them, even the apologetic ones, even the ones written in the wrong name — to the page where the someone finally signs. You do not bury who you were. You wear them, inside out, as the warm lining, against exactly this weather.

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This is why the Tomb of Becoming will not hold still for its own portrait, and why the Bureau's plate carries its unusual warning. To draw it once and call that drawing the building would be to do to the tomb the very thing the tomb spent eleven gold years arguing against. So we draw it in the act, mid-change, winter swags caught in the moment before they become something else, the rose just showing — and we tell you plainly that it will have moved on by the time you cross the plaza, and that this is not a flaw in the drawing but the entire and joyful subject of it.

Those who come here are, disproportionately, the young and the not-yet, and also the no-longer-young who have finally given themselves permission to begin, which Surjan held to be the bravest pilgrims of all. They stand on the granite, in the bronze shadow of permanence, and they watch a building be unafraid to be in the middle of itself, and they go away able to bear, for a while, the discomfort of their own slow change. The casual observer sees only a person looking at a strange gold building. But the tomb sees what the tomb was built to broadcast: the larva, on the plaza, beginning at last to suspect the wings.

Surjan and the Island: The Second Conversation

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THE ISLAND. *Two built, and already you are insufferable. I gave you my forested head and my proudest plaza and you have filled them with a woman who would not investigate her own happiness and a clerk who would not stay buried. Do you mean to do this to all of me?*

SURJAN. *All of you. Head to foot.*

THE ISLAND. *You know what I notice, weather-person? Your two joys are the same joy wearing different coats. Waking glad for no reason. Becoming yourself for no reward. Both are gifts no one earned and no one can repeal. You are not building ten tombs. You are building one argument ten times, in case the city is slow.*

SURJAN. *The city is slow. I love it for being slow. A fast city would have learned this in an afternoon and forgotten it by dinner. A slow city needs ten gold reminders the size of buildings, and even then it will forget, and even then I will not mind, because forgetting is only the night the morning is for.*

THE ISLAND. *You will mind. When you are weather and they walk under you not looking up, you will mind.*

SURJAN. *Then I will be the kind of weather that is impossible not to look up at. Take me south. Out of the forest, off the plaza, into the crowd. The next joys do not happen to a person alone. They need other people. Take me to where the strangers are.*

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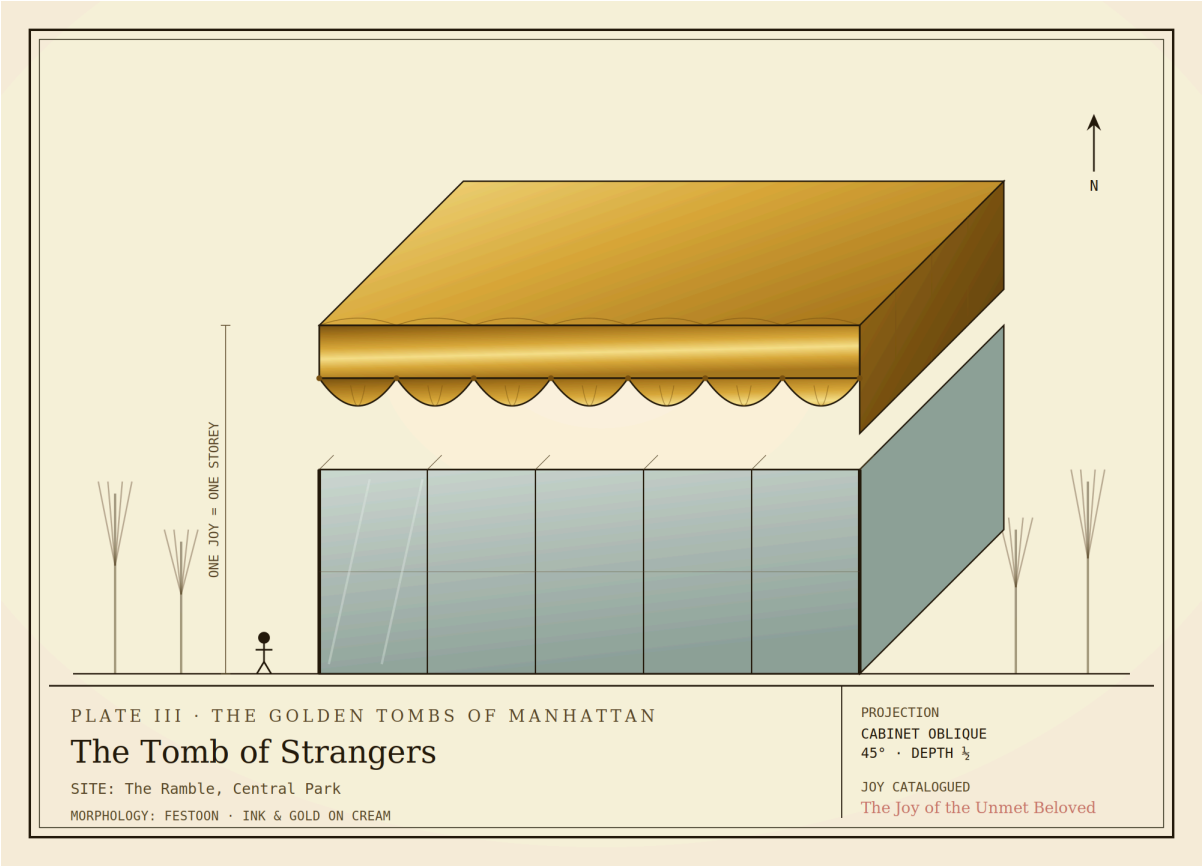
Suite the Second

The Tombs of Encounter

The joys of beginning happen, in the end, to a person alone, in a bed or on a plaza, in the privacy of their own waking and changing. The next three joys cannot happen alone at all. They require another face. Surjan placed these three in the most peopled parts of the island — a wood made for wandering into others, a street made of homecomings, and a great water that doubles every face that bends over it — because the joy of encounter is the one gladness you cannot manufacture in solitude and must, humblingly, receive from someone else.

PLATE III

The Tomb of Strangers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ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE III · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of Strangers
SITE: The Ramble, Central Park
MORPHOLOGY: FESTOON · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Unmet Beloved

Plate III. The Tomb of Strangers, the Ramble. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The hem here is drawn in long festoon swags, like the canopy of the wood it hides in; the Bureau confesses that this is the only plate in the series the cartographers could not verify, since the building is rarely twice seen from the same path.

In the middle of the park there is a wood that was built, with great care and at great expense, to be confusing. The Ramble is a deliberate labyrinth, thirty-six acres of made wilderness laced with paths that double back, fork without warning, and arrive, again and again, at views you are sure you have already left. It was designed in the last century as a place to become pleasantly lost, and it has served, ever since, as the one acre of the grid where a person can stop being a destination and become, for an hour, a wanderer — and where, historically, people who had nowhere else on the island to meet have met, and recognised one another, and been glad. Surjan loved it beyond reason and hid a tomb in it that is, fittingly, the hardest of the ten to find on purpose.

It is the only tomb the Bureau cannot fully draw, because it is rarely twice seen from the same path, and the only tomb whose broadcast the Bureau cannot transcribe, because it tells a different story to every listener. This last is not a figure of speech. The Tomb of Strangers

does not contain a story. It contains a method. Stand beneath it long enough to slow your breath to the speed of its breathing, and it will broadcast to you the untold life of a stranger — not one of your choosing, but one the tomb chooses, apparently at random, from the unimaginable reservoir of people you have stood near in your life and never known. The gold of it is woven in long festoon swags, like the canopy of the wood, so that even at twenty paces you are not sure where the trees end and the tomb begins, which is precisely the disorientation the building wants, since its entire argument is that the line between the strangers and the beloved is far thinner, and far more crossable, than the frightened city pretends.

The Bureau records, for those who care about such things, that the wood was a place of meeting long before the tomb was hidden in it. For more than a century the Ramble has been where the city sent the people who had nowhere else to be met — who could not, in the daylight streets, recognise one another, or be recognised, or stand near the ones they longed to stand near without danger. They came into the made wilderness and found, among its deliberately confusing paths, a margin of the grid where the rules thinned, where a stranger might become, in an hour, the most important person in a life, where whole loves began with nothing but a glance held a half-second too long beside a particular tree. Surjan hid the Tomb of Strangers here precisely because the wood already knew the lesson the tomb teaches, had known it for a hundred years in the bodies of the people the city would not let meet anywhere else, and the tomb is in some sense only a gold acknowledgement, late and inadequate, of a sanctuary the trees had been quietly providing all along.

The Bureau adds a second specimen, briefer than the first, because the file seemed thin with only one and the tomb's whole point is the inexhaustible multitude. To a man who came into the wood furious — at his work, at his marriage, at the grey machinery of a life that seemed to be happening to him — the tomb broadcast the untold afternoon of a woman he had once stood behind in a bakery line and resented, silently, for taking too long to choose. She had been choosing, the tomb told him, a cake for her own birthday, which no one had remembered, and she was buying it for herself, with great care, refusing to let the day pass unmarked merely because the people who should have marked it had not — and she was not sad, or not only sad; she was performing, alone, in a bakery, a small fierce act of self-honouring that the furious man had read, from behind, as mere dithering. He had resented a woman for the time it took her to love herself a little on a day no one else would. He left the wood, the Bureau notes, and bought a cake, and brought it home, and his marriage was not saved by a cake, but the afternoon was, and sometimes an afternoon is where saving has to start.

The Bureau, professionally obliged to attempt the impossible, did record one transcript, with the permission of the listener, and offers it here not as the story the tomb tells but as a specimen of the kind of story it tells, the way a single pressed leaf can stand for a forest it

cannot contain. Here, then, is one stranger's life, as the Tomb of Strangers broadcast it on a grey afternoon to a woman who had come into the wood to be alone.

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You once stood beside a man in an elevator for the length of nine floors, the tomb told her, and you did not look at him, because it was morning and you were tired and looking at strangers is a small expense the tired cannot always afford. You have forgotten him entirely. He has forgotten you. By every measure the city keeps, nothing happened: two bodies shared a rising box for forty seconds and parted. But listen. On that particular morning, in that particular box, the man beside you was carrying the following life.

He had learned, the night before, that he was going to be a father. He had not slept. He was riding the elevator up to a job he intended to quit within the year, having decided, somewhere around three in the morning, with the terror and the joy braided so tightly he could not tell them apart, that he wanted to be the kind of father who was home for dinner, and that this would cost him the career he had spent a decade building, and that he did not care, that he had never in his life been so unafraid of caring. He was, in that elevator, beside you, in the most important morning of his life so far. His hands, which you did not look at, were shaking. He was rehearsing, behind a perfectly ordinary face, the sentence he would say that evening to the person he loved: we are going to be all right; I have figured out what matters; it is not this building. And he rode up beside you carrying all of that, the whole luminous trembling weight of a man at the exact hinge of his life, and you stood there tired and did not know, and that is not a failure, that is simply the condition of the city, that everyone you have ever ignored was, at that moment, the protagonist of a life as vast and frightening and joyful as your own.

The woman in the wood, the Bureau records, began to weep at this point, not from sadness but from a tenderness so sudden and so large it had nowhere else to go. She wept for a man she would never see again, whose name she had never known, whose child was by now most likely grown, and the tomb let her, breathing slowly over her in its festoon swags, and then it gave her the gift it exists to give, which is not the stranger's story but the thing the story is for. Now ride the elevators differently, it told her. Now you know. You will never again stand in a rising box full of tired strangers and believe that nothing is happening. Every one of them is at a hinge. Every one of them is carrying a life that would break your heart with its courage if you knew it, and you will almost never know it, and that is all right, because you no longer need to know it to feel it. The joy I broadcast is not that you will meet your beloved among the strangers, though you might, in a wood like this one, on an afternoon like this one. The joy is that they are already beloved. Every one of them. Already. By right. Carrying whole luminous lives past you on the street, and you among them, beloved and unknowing, a stranger's broadcast even now, the protagonist of a story some other tired soul will fail to

read in some other elevator, both of you saved, without ever speaking, by the bare fact of being two of the impossible many.

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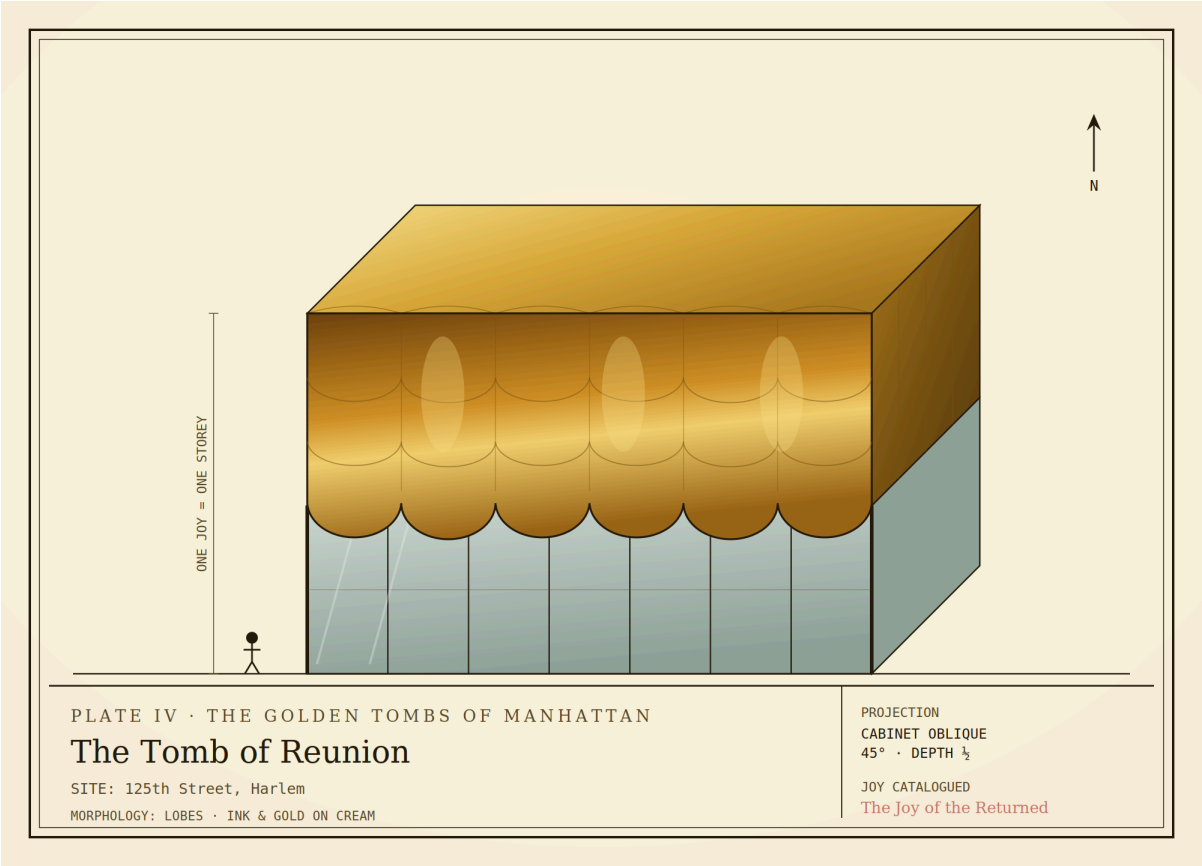
This is why the Tomb of Strangers is hidden in the one wood on the island built for getting lost, and why it is the tomb the Bureau most often fails to find when it goes looking, and most often stumbles on when it has given up. You do not come to it. You come upon it. It rewards the wanderer and eludes the tourist, and it sends every visitor back out of the wood and into the crowd with the same altered eyes: the eyes of someone who has been told, by a gold building in the trees, that the city is not a machine for processing strangers but a reservoir of unmet beloveds, thirty-six acres deep and eight million wide, any one of whom, on any morning, in any rising box, might turn out to have been, the whole time, at the hinge of the most important day of their life, and beautiful, and frightened, and yours.

PLATE IV

The Tomb of Reunion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ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE IV · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of Reunion
SITE: 125th Street, Harlem
MORPHOLOGY: LOBES · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Returned

Plate IV. The Tomb of Reunion, 125th Street. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The gold is shown in full warm lobes, the heaviest and most generous in the series; the tomb broadcasts at the hour the evening trains come in, and the cartographers drew it at that hour, swollen with its loudest light.

There is a street that runs across the shoulders of the island like a clavicle, and it has been, for longer than anyone alive can remember, a street of returns. Trains come up under it and out of it; people who left, or were taken, or wandered, or were sent, have been coming back to it and along it for a century, off the trains and the buses and the long roads north and south, into the arms of people who waited. Surjan called it the artery of homecomings and built upon it the warmest tomb of the ten, dressed in full gold lobes, heavy and generous, the colour of a lamp left on in a window. It broadcasts at the hour the evening trains come in, when the street fills with people scanning the crowd for a particular face, and it tells, over and over, in that hour of arrivals, the story of a single reunion, which is the story of all of them.

The story it tells is not a reunion across death. Surjan was firm about this. There are tombs, in other cities, that promise you the return of the dead, and they are cruel, however gold, because they promise what cannot be given and leave the griever poorer for the hope.

This tomb promises only what the living can actually have, which is rarer and harder and entirely possible: the return of someone you lost while you were both still alive. The estranged. The unspoken-to. The one whose number you still have and have not dialled in twenty years. The tomb broadcasts the joy of reconciliation, which it holds to be the most under-attempted joy in the city, because it is the only one that requires you to risk being the one who reaches first.

The street was an artery of homecomings long before the Bureau dressed a building in lamp-coloured gold and set it there. Up the great roads and rails from the south came, across a century, the people of the largest migration the country has known, stepping off the trains into a neighbourhood that became, by their arriving, a capital — of music, of letters, of a particular and hard-won joy that had been carried north in suitcases and song. The street learned, in those decades, the precise choreography of the reunion: the scanning of the platform, the half-second of doubt before recognition, the dropped bag, the collision of two bodies that had been apart too long. It learned, too, the other homecomings — the ones that did not come, the letters that said next year and meant never, the chairs kept empty at tables for people who could not, in the end, make the journey back. Surjan placed the tomb here knowing the street was already fluent in both, and built it to broadcast the homecoming that is always still possible, to a street that had buried too many of the kind that no longer was.

As to why reconciliation is the most under-attempted joy in the city, the tomb is unsparing, because it loves you too much to flatter you. It is under-attempted because pride disguises itself as principle, and a grudge held long enough acquires the appearance of a moral position, so that the work of reconciling comes to feel like a betrayal of some important truth rather than what it actually is, which is the setting down of a weight that was only ever hurting the one who carried it. The arithmetic is merciless and simple. The estranged person spends years insisting they are owed the first move, and the other person spends the same years insisting precisely the same thing, and both are, by their own lights, entirely correct, and the correctness is the prison, because two people each waiting to be reached will wait, in perfect symmetrical justice, forever. The tomb's whole gift is to break the symmetry — to whisper to one of them, at the hour the trains come in, that being the one who reaches first is not a defeat in the long quarrel but an escape from it, and the only victory available to either, and that the door has been, the whole time, on their side.

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A woman named Junie had a brother once, and then for twenty years did not. They had not died to each other; that would have been simpler, and grief, for all its weight, at least knows what to do with itself. They had done something worse and more ordinary. They had quarrelled, over money that no longer existed and a remark that neither could now quote accurately, and the quarrel had hardened, the way water left out hardens, not by any single dramatic freezing but by the simple passage of cold time, until what had been a fight became

a silence and the silence became a fact and the fact became, somehow, an identity: Junie was a person who did not speak to her brother, and he was a person who did not speak to her, and each had built a whole life on the far side of that not-speaking, and to cross it now would mean admitting that twenty years had been, in some terrible accountancy, wasted, and no one wants to file that return.

She had reasons not to call, and they were good reasons, and she rehearsed them often, the way you worry a sore tooth. He had been wrong. He had been the one who said the thing. He had not called either, in all those years, which proved he did not want to, which meant a call from her would be an imposition, a humiliation, a gift he had made clear he did not wish to receive. Every reason was sound. Together they made a wall she had spent two decades maintaining, repointing the mortar whenever a holiday or a song or a particular slant of light threatened to bring it down. She was very tired of the wall. She did not know how tired until the evening she found herself, for no reason she had planned, standing on the artery of homecomings at the hour the trains come in, under a great gold building she had passed a thousand times and never once gone toward.

The tomb was telling its story, and the story, that evening, was hers, although she did not yet know that the tomb's one trick is to make its single story sound, to each listener, like an account of their own life read aloud by a stranger. It told her about the wall, and the good reasons, and the wasted years, and she stood there in the crowd of arrivals nodding bitterly, thinking, yes, that is exactly how it is, that is exactly why it cannot be undone. And then the tomb delivered the line it had been built, lobe and lamp and a century of homecomings, to deliver. The years are not the cost of reconciling, it told her. The years are the long way home. You have been told that to call him now would mean admitting the twenty years were wasted, and so you have kept the silence to protect the years, as though the silence honoured them. But the silence is what wastes them. The call is what redeems them. Reconcile, and the twenty years are not erased and are not wasted; they become the distance you travelled to get back, the long road north, the reason the arrival will mean what it means. No one weeps at a reunion of people who were never apart. The lostness is not the enemy of the homecoming. The lostness is what makes it a homecoming and not merely a Tuesday. Call your brother, and you will not lose the twenty years. You will finally, at the hour the trains come in, get to keep them.

Junie called her brother that night. The Bureau does not record the conversation, because the Bureau was not invited, and there are arrivals too private even for a catalogue of joy. It records only that she called, and that he answered on the fourth ring in a voice she had not heard in twenty years and recognised in less than one, and that the first thing either of them managed to say, after the long road north of all those years, was not the apology each had rehearsed and feared but a single helpless syllable of laughter, the laughter of two people astonished to discover that the wall they had each spent two decades maintaining had been,

the whole time, a door, unlocked, with the light on behind it, waiting only for one of them to be tired enough of the cold to try the handle.

❦ ❦ ❦

At the hour the evening trains come in, the people on that street are scanning the crowd for a particular face, and the tomb above them is the colour of a lamp left on in a window, and it tells them, in its warm and generous lobes, that the face they are looking for need not be a face that left on a train. It can be a face on the far side of a silence they have maintained for years and are now, perhaps, finally tired enough to cross. The tomb does not make the call for you. No tomb can. It only stands there, gold and warm and patient, at the artery of homecomings, broadcasting the one true thing the estranged most need and least believe: that the door was never a wall, that the years were never wasted, and that the handle is, and has always been, on your side.

PLATE V

The Tomb of Being Seen

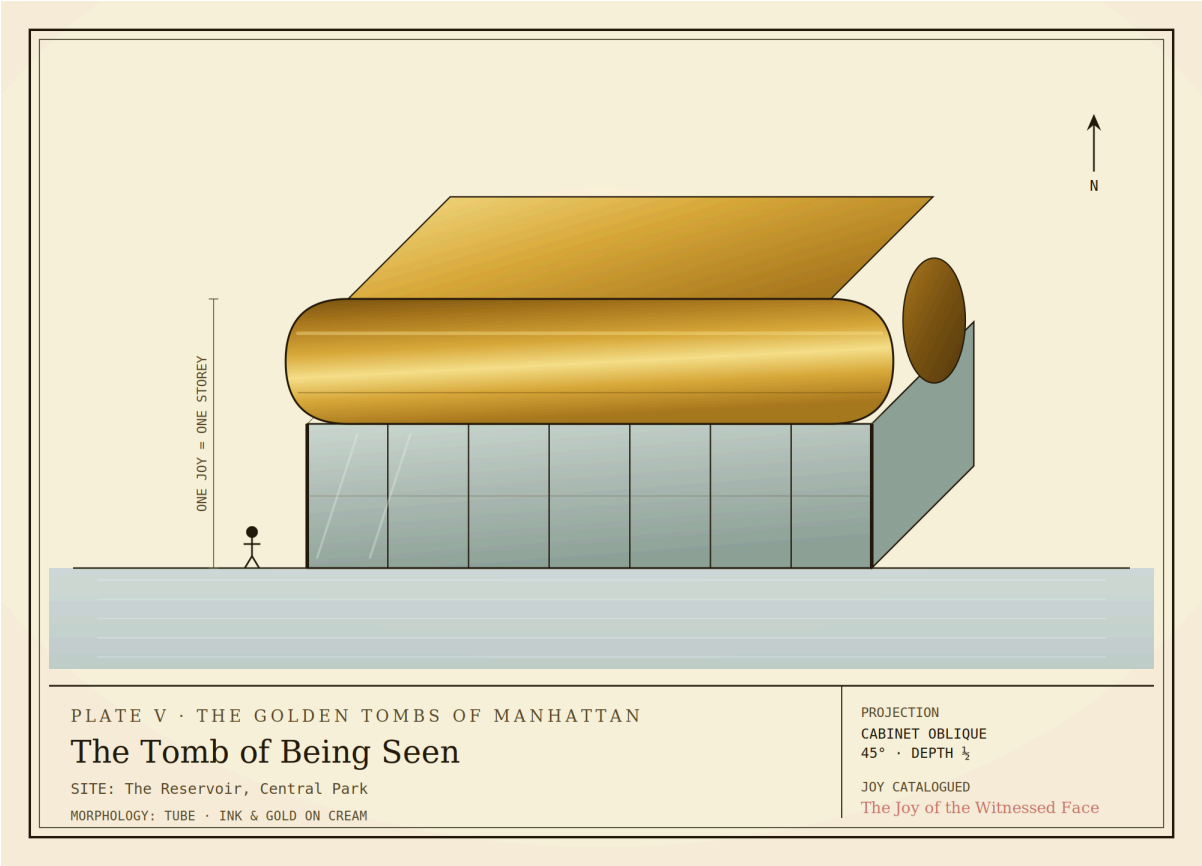
N
ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE V · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of Being Seen
SITE: The Reservoir, Central Park
MORPHOLOGY: TUBE · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Witnessed Face

Plate V. The Tomb of Being Seen, the Reservoir. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The hem is drawn in fine draped points; the tomb stands at the lip of the great water, and on still mornings it is doubled exactly in the surface, so that the plate, the Bureau notes, depicts only the upper half of the actual apparition.

At the centre of the park lies a great still water that the city no longer drinks from but cannot bring itself to drain, because it has become the one wide mirror the island owns — a hundred and six acres of sky laid flat, doubling the clouds, the towers, the runners on its rim, and every face that bends over the railing to look. Surjan built the Tomb of Being Seen at the lip of this water, and built it knowing that on still mornings it would be doubled exactly in the surface, an upper tomb of gold standing on a lower tomb of gold, so that the apparition is always twice the building the Bureau was able to draw. The plate, in honesty, shows only the half above the waterline.

This tomb broadcasts in the second person, which unnerves first-time visitors, who are accustomed to stories about other people and not at all prepared to be addressed. It does not tell you about Aurelia or Daniel or a stranger in an elevator. It tells you about you. And it does not show you, as you might fear from a building beside a mirror, your appearance — the tomb

has no interest in your appearance, which it considers the least true thing about you. It shows you your face as it is seen by the people who love you, which is a different face entirely, and which most people have never once been permitted to see.

The Bureau wishes to dwell, because the tomb does, on the particular cruelty of the ordinary mirror, which most people accept as a neutral instrument and which is in fact the most biased witness a person ever consults. The mirror shows the face at rest, composed, slightly braced — for one cannot look into a mirror without the small involuntary arranging that the act of being observed produces, even when the observer is oneself. It shows the face lit from above, by the harsh overhead light of the bathroom and the harsher overhead light of self-judgement, which carves every line deeper and pools every shadow darker than any light a loving eye would ever choose. And it shows the face reversed, left for right, subtly wrong in a way the owner cannot name but the camera confirms, so that people are often startled and dismayed by photographs of themselves, not understanding that the photograph is closer to the truth and the mirror is the lifelong lie they had mistaken for it. A person who has consulted only this witness for sixty years has built their entire sense of their own face on the testimony of the one observer in the world who has never once seen them happy, relaxed, listening, or loved.

The Bureau records one instance, of a man who had believed himself, on the mirror's evidence, to be cold of face — severe, unwelcoming, a man whose resting expression he had been told, and had come to believe, frightened children and discouraged friends. He came to the Reservoir at the insistence of his daughter and stood at the railing expecting to be shown his severity at last in gold, confirmed and monumental. The tomb showed him, instead, the face his daughter saw across the breakfast table every morning of her childhood: open, attentive, helplessly fond, a face that rearranged itself into softness the instant she entered a room and that he had never witnessed because he was always, when she entered, looking at her and not at himself. He wept at the railing, the Bureau notes, the particular tears of a man learning that he had spent a life apologising for a coldness that existed only in a badly lit reversed image, and that the people who loved him had been seeing, the whole time, the warm true face he had never once been allowed to meet. He had frightened no children. The mirror had frightened him, and he had passed the fear along as fact.

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You have spent your whole life, the tomb tells you, on the wrong side of your own face. This is no one's fault. It is a simple accident of architecture: the eyes are set in the front of the head, and so the one face you can never see directly is your own, and the one mirror you are given shows it to you backwards, flattened, and lit by the cruel overhead light of self-regard, which is the most unflattering light there is. You have studied that backwards, flattened, badly lit face for years. You have catalogued its flaws with a diligence you have never once applied to

anyone you love. You believe, on the evidence of the mirror, that you know what your face looks like. You are wrong. You have been looking at a stranger the world has never met.

Because the people who love you do not see the mirror-face. They have never seen it. They see the face you wear when you are listening to them, which you have never witnessed, because you cannot listen to someone and watch yourself listen at the same time. They see the face you make when they come into a room, in the quarter-second before you arrange it into something more composed — the unguarded, undefended, lit-from-within face of simple gladness at their arrival, a face you have made ten thousand times and seen exactly never. They see the face you wear when you have forgotten yourself entirely, which is the only time the self is beautiful, because the self is only ugly when it is watching itself in the mirror, frightened, looking for flaws to confirm. The tomb broadcasts that face back to you. It bends the gold and the water and the morning light into the one mirror you were never given, the mirror that shows you not how you look but how you are looked at, and for the space of one still morning it lets you stand at the lip of the great water and be seen, accurately, lovingly, the way you have been seen all along by everyone who ever loved you and could never find the words to tell you that the face you apologise for is the face they fell for.

Here is the line the Tomb of Being Seen saves for the moment you begin, as nearly everyone does, to flinch from this — to insist that it is too generous, that it cannot be true, that you know your own face and it is not lovable, that the loving eyes are simply mistaken or kind. You are not seen in spite of your flaws, the tomb tells you, gold doubled in the water. You are not loved by people who have failed to notice what is wrong with you. They have noticed. They have noticed far more than you think, including the things you believe you have hidden, and they see, in the same glance, the whole of you, the flaws and the gladness and the chipped third step and the lamp left on, and they have arrived, after long and clear-eyed looking, at a conclusion you refuse to credit because the mirror has lied to you your whole life: that you are, exactly as you are, with everything wrong with you fully accounted for, a face worth bending over a railing to see doubled. The joy I broadcast is not that you are flawless. It is that you were never required to be. You were seen, and seen truly, and kept anyway — not anyway, the tomb corrects itself; kept, full stop; the anyway is the last lie of the mirror, and you may now put it down.

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People leave this tomb changed in a way the Bureau finds difficult to photograph but easy to recognise. They walk back along the rim of the great water lighter in the face, as though some long-held tension in the muscles of self-regard had finally been permitted to release. Some of them weep, quietly, at the railing, doubled in the surface, and the runners go by and do not understand, and the tomb stands gold above its golden twin and does not need them to. It has done the one thing it was built to do: it has let a person stand at the centre of the island, at the lip of the only wide mirror the city owns, and see, for one still morning, the beloved face

they have worn their whole life and never once been allowed to meet — and recognise it, with a shock of joy, as their own.

The Bureau wishes to add, against its own professional reticence, that the Tomb of Being Seen has changed the people who tend it more than any of the other nine, and that this is not a coincidence the cartographers can explain but a fact they can attest. To work each morning at the lip of the great water, transcribing the second-person broadcast, is to be told the building's one truth so often that it eventually applies itself to the transcriber: that the face you apologise for is the face they fell for, that you were seen and kept, full stop. There is no inoculation against being told a kindness daily, and the keepers of this tomb have, one by one, over their seasons of service, set down the mirror's lie about their own faces, and gone home softer in the muscles of self-regard, and become, the Bureau suspects, slightly easier to love, having finally permitted themselves to believe they already were. If there is a hazard in the work, it is this one, and the Bureau records it as a warning that is really an invitation: do not take a post at the Reservoir unless you are prepared to be seen accurately, and to survive it, and to discover, to your considerable inconvenience and lasting joy, that the face you have spent a life ashamed of was, the whole time, on the far side of the mirror, beloved.

Surjan and the Island: The Third Conversation

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THE ISLAND. *Five now. And I notice you have stopped letting people be alone. A stranger in an elevator. A brother on a wire. A face in my old reservoir. You have decided that joy needs an audience.*

SURJAN. *Not an audience. A witness. They are different. An audience watches you perform a joy you may not feel. A witness sees the joy you did not know you were showing. Every one of these three is about being seen without performing — by a stranger, by a brother, by the people who love you. The first suite was joy you give yourself. This one is joy you can only be given.*

THE ISLAND. *And what cannot be given, weather-person? You have done waking, becoming, strangers, return, the witnessed face. What is left that a tomb can hold?*

SURJAN. *The body. We have been very high-minded for five tombs. Mornings and metamorphoses and the faces of the beloved. But a person is not a mind that regrettably has a body. A person is a body that has learned, against considerable opposition, to think. The next three tombs are for the animal — the honest body, the small kindnesses it survives on, and the laughter that breaks out of it even at the funeral. Take me to the oldest stones you have. Take me up to the cloister.*

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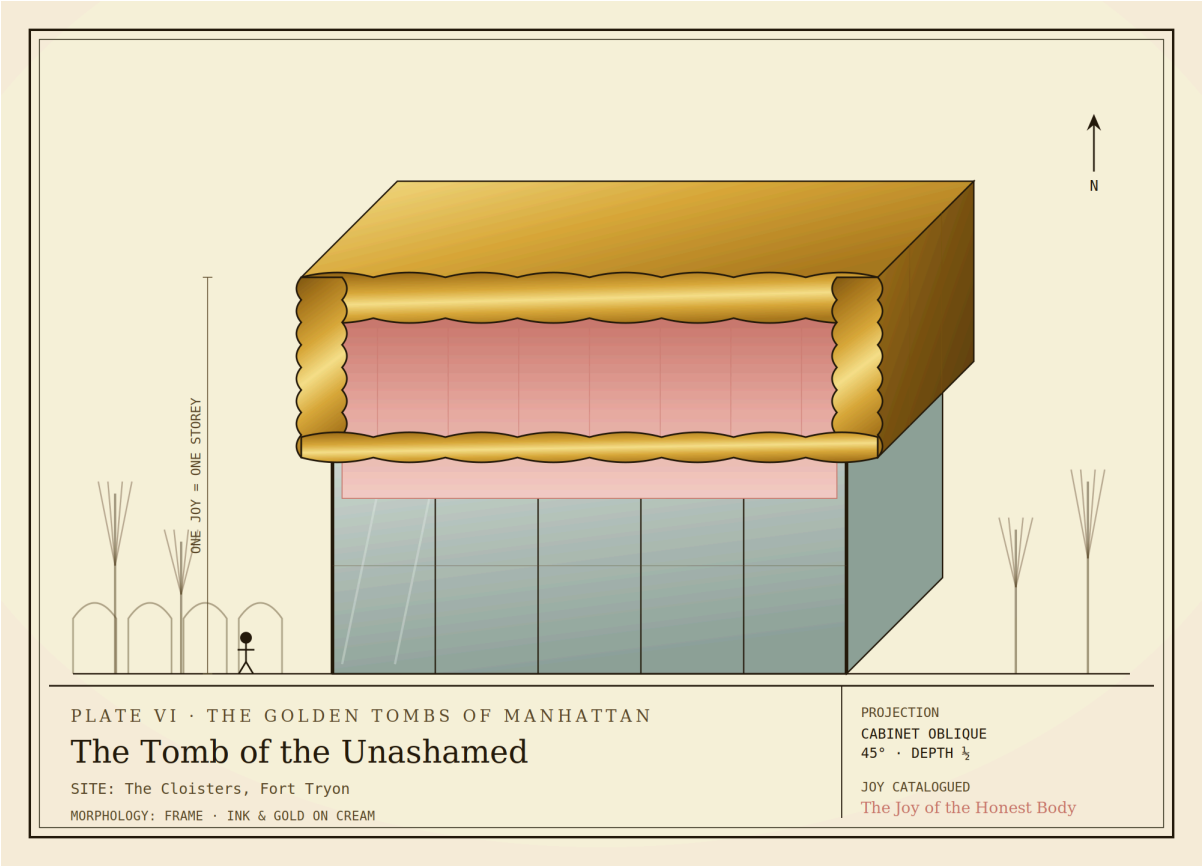
Suite the Third

The Tombs of the Body and Its Mercies

Here the catalogue comes down out of the high air of mornings and metamorphoses and faces, and goes to live, for three tombs, in the animal — in the honest body, in the small mercies that keep it going, and in the laughter that breaks out of it even at the graveside. Surjan distrusted any joy that pretended to have left the body behind. The body, they said, is the only address joy has ever been delivered to, and a philosophy that is ashamed of the body is a philosophy that has refused the package at the door.

PLATE VI

The Tomb of the Unashamed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ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE VI · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of the Unashamed
SITE: The Cloisters, Fort Tryon
MORPHOLOGY: FRAME · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Honest Body

Plate VI. The Tomb of the Unashamed, the Cloisters. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. Festoon hem with a deep rose lining shown openly at the bottom edge; of all the tombs this one most insists on its colour of flesh, and the cartographers were instructed not to soften it.

On the high northern bluff above the Hudson, among the oldest stones the island owns — a monastery quarried in another country, in another century, and rebuilt here arch by numbered arch around four transplanted cloisters and their herb gardens — Surjan set the tomb that argues most fiercely against the building it stands beside. For the monks who first cut those stones spent their lives trying to carve the body away, to starve it and scourge it and reduce it until only the soul remained, pure and bodiless and fit for heaven. The Tomb of the Unashamed stands among their stones and broadcasts, in gold with a deep rose lining shown openly at the hem, the precise reverse: that the body is not the obstacle to the holy thing but is itself the holy thing, the one cloister you never leave, the monastery you were born already inside of and will inhabit, faithfully tended or not, until the day it lets you go.

The rose of this tomb is the deepest in the series, and it is not hidden. In the others the lining is a hint, a breath, a constant glimpsed at the hem. Here it is shown openly, a band of

flesh-coloured warmth declared at the bottom edge of the gold, because shame is the subject and the cure for shame is not concealment but declaration. The cartographers, the Bureau notes with some pride, were specifically instructed not to soften it. A tomb that argued for the unashamed body while drawing its own body coyly would be, like the Tomb of Becoming holding still, a lie told in the very medium of its message.

It broadcasts in the late afternoon, when the light comes low across the river and into the herb gardens, gilding the rosemary and the rue, and it tells the story of a person who spent the first half of a life at war with the body they were issued, and the second half, slowly, learning to live in it as in a beloved and imperfect house. Here is the story the Tomb of the Unashamed tells among the monastery stones.

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There was a person — we will not assign them a name or a gender, because the tomb does not, because the war it describes is fought in every kind of body and the tomb wishes each listener to be able to enlist — there was a person who was taught early, by no single cruelty but by the steady weather of a shaming world, that their body was a problem to be managed. It was too much: too hungry, too soft in some places and too sharp in others, too loud in its wants, too queer in the direction of its longing, too quick to flush and sweat and want and need. The world had a thousand small instruments for teaching this lesson — a mirror, a magazine, a remark, a silence where praise should have been — and the person learned it thoroughly, as bright children learn the cruel things most thoroughly of all, and grew up believing that they were a fine mind unfortunately delivered in a defective parcel, and that the task of a life was to apologise for the parcel and, where possible, to improve it toward a standard it would never reach.

So they made war. They fought their appetite and called it discipline. They fought their softness and called it strength. They fought their desire, which was the most frightening front of all, and called the fighting virtue, and lay awake ashamed of wanting what bodies want, as though the wanting were a flaw in them rather than the oldest and most ordinary fact of being a warm animal among other warm animals. They were not unusual in this. Half the city is at this same war and believes itself uniquely defective. The shame is so universal that it passes for the human condition, and a person can live a whole life inside it and die never having spent a single unguarded hour at home in their own skin, which the tomb holds to be the saddest of all the deaths, sadder than the death that comes at the end, because it is a death suffered while still alive.

The Bureau notes that the tomb makes deliberate use of its setting among the herb gardens, where the monks once grew rosemary and rue and sage not for pleasure but for medicine and penance, the body being to them a patient to be dosed and a sinner to be disciplined. The Tomb of the Unashamed broadcasts its late-afternoon story directly across these beds, gilding the very plants the monks grew to subdue appetite, and the irony is exact

and intended: that the herbs which were cultivated to manage the body's hungers are now lit gold each evening in service of an argument that the hungers were never the problem. Appetite, the tomb insists into the gilded rosemary, is not the body's rebellion against the soul; it is the body's praise. The mouth that waters is offering thanks. The stomach that wants is keeping faith with the oldest covenant there is, the one that says: you are alive, and being alive is a thing that wants, and the wanting is not a flaw in the design but the entire evidence that the design is working.

And on the subject of desire — the front of the war that the person in the story found most frightening, and that the monks among these stones fought hardest — the tomb is at its tenderest and most insistent. The particular direction of a person's longing, whoever they turn toward in the dark, however the world has taught them to be ashamed of it, is broadcast here not as a thing to be tolerated or forgiven but as a form of praise as holy as any the monks ever sang, and holier than most, because it is sung by the whole body and not merely the trained voice. The queer and the ordinary longing, the late and the early, the loud and the secret: all of it, the tomb declares across the medicinal beds, is the holy animal offering up, in the only language it was given, its astonishment at not being alone in the universe. The monks tried to grow a garden that would quiet the body. The tomb has turned their garden into a place where the body is told, at last, in gold, that it never had anything to apologise for, and that the longing it was taught to bury is, of all its faithful functions, the one most like a prayer.

What changed them was not a triumph. This is important, and the tomb dwells on it in the low gold afternoon. They did not win the war by finally achieving the standard; no one does; the standard recedes as you approach it, that is its function. What changed them was the body's plain and stubborn faithfulness, noticed at last, late, by accident. For the body, all those years it was being fought, had been keeping every promise it ever made. It had carried them up every stair without being thanked. It had healed its own cuts in the dark while they slept, asking nothing. It had digested its meals and beaten its heart some two and a half billion times and breathed without being reminded and flushed with pleasure when pleasure was allowed and wept when weeping was needed and stood up, every single morning, however unloved, and offered another day of faithful service to a mind that repaid it with contempt. The scars it carried were not defects. They were receipts. Each one was a place where the body had been wounded and had quietly, without complaint, repaired the damage and gone on carrying its ungrateful tenant forward into the years.

The person noticed this, finally, in a body grown older — for it is often age, the tomb says, that brokers the peace, when the standard becomes so plainly unreachable that the war becomes absurd and a kind of armistice steals in unbidden. They noticed the faithfulness. They noticed the receipts. They noticed that the parcel they had spent fifty years apologising for had, the whole time, been the only thing that had never once abandoned them, the most loyal companion of their life, asking only to be fed and rested and, occasionally, allowed to

want what it wanted without being made to feel that the wanting was a sin. And something in them that had been clenched since childhood, some long-held fist in the soul, opened.

Here is the line the Tomb of the Unashamed broadcasts lowest and warmest into the gilded herb gardens, the line the monks among their bodiless heaven never learned. Your body is not the cloister you must escape to reach the holy thing. Your body is the holy thing, and the cloister, and the monk, and the prayer, all four. It is the only temple you will ever be issued and it is already consecrated, was consecrated at your first breath, requires no further sanctifying and never did. The hunger is holy. The softness is holy. The desire, the queer and particular direction of your longing, is holy — not tolerated, not forgiven, holy, a form of praise the body offers up on its own behalf. The scars are holy, being receipts for faithful service. You were not delivered defective into a defective parcel. You were delivered whole, into a faithful one, and the only defect in the whole arrangement was the lie that taught you otherwise, and you may set that lie down now, here, among these old stones that were cut by men who believed the opposite, and you may go back out into the city at home, for the first time, in the beloved and imperfect house you were always, already, holy enough to live in.

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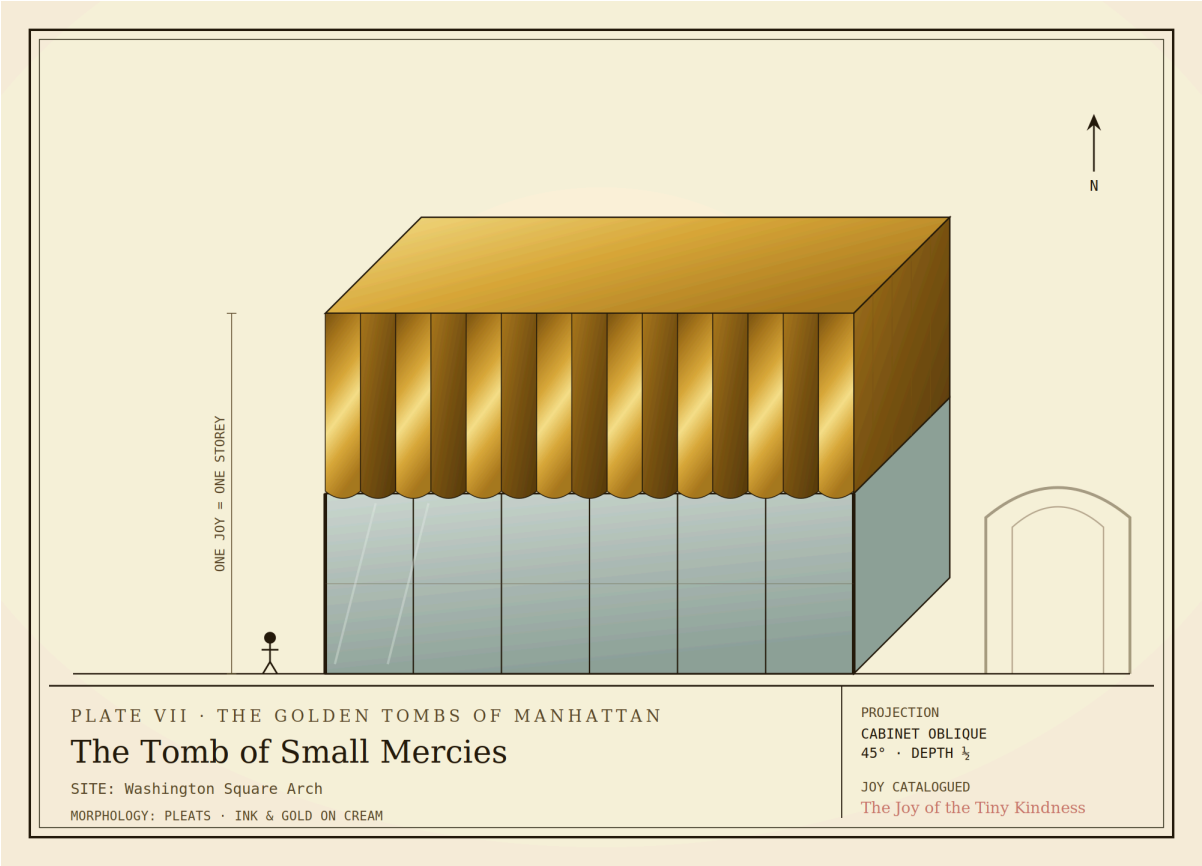
Those who come to this tomb are of every age and every shape and every history of war with themselves, and they come, the Bureau has observed, walking carefully, the way people walk who are not sure they are allowed. They leave walking differently — not proudly, exactly, pride being just the war fought from the other trench, but easily, at home, inhabiting their own steps. The rose shows openly at the hem above them, the colour of flesh declared and not apologised for, and the old monastery stones stand witness, and the river goes by below carrying the low gold light, and a person who arrived at war with the only loyal companion they will ever have goes home, in the late afternoon, having signed, at last, the long-overdue armistice, and made peace with the holy and faithful animal that is, and was always, and will be to the end, themselves.

PLATE VII

The Tomb of Small Mercies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ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE VII · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of Small Mercies
SITE: Washington Square Arch
MORPHOLOGY: PLEATS · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Tiny Kindness

Plate VII. The Tomb of Small Mercies, Washington Square. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The most finely pleated of the ten — eleven small ripples to the hem, one for each of the original mercies catalogued by the Bureau — drawn at midday, when the broadcast is busiest and the square most full.

Under the great arch, around the fountain that is more often full of children and dogs and the chronically unhurried than of water, in the most democratic square the island owns, where the chess players and the buskers and the students and the napping and the newly in love all hold the same ground without a ticket, Surjan placed the Tomb of Small Mercies. It is the most finely pleated of the ten — the Bureau counts eleven small ripples to its hem, and likes to claim, though it cannot prove, that there is one for each of the original mercies the building was tuned to broadcast. It broadcasts at midday, when the square is fullest, and it tells no single story. It tells a list.

This is the tomb's particular method, and it unsettles the literary, who expect a narrative and are given instead a litany. But Surjan held that some joys are too small and too many to be told one at a time, and that the only honest form for the joy of small mercies is the form of the small mercies themselves: a long, patient, unhierarchical enumeration, each item brief,

none more important than the rest, the whole accumulating into something that could not be said any other way. The tomb broadcasts, at midday, over the most crowded ground in the city, the following catalogue, which the Bureau has set down as faithfully as a list can be set down, knowing that a list, unlike a story, is never finished.

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It broadcasts the mercy of the stranger who held the closing train doors with one arm and a grimace so that the running woman could make it, and who never learned, and will never learn, that she was running to a hospital, and that the held doors meant she was there in time.

The mercy of the man at the coffee cart who has memorised four hundred orders and says good morning by name to people who have told him their troubles at seven a.m. for years and who go to work, on the bad days, slightly less alone for having been called by name once before the day could begin to wear them down.

The mercy of the person who, finding a wallet on the seat, ran three blocks in the wrong direction to return it, and refused the reward, and was late for their own appointment, and has forgotten the whole thing, and does not know that the owner of the wallet has not forgotten, and tells the story still, and has himself become, on the strength of it, a returner of wallets.

The mercy of the neighbour who took in the packages, and watered the plants without being asked, and said nothing about it, so that the kindness arrived weightless, with no debt attached.

The mercy of the person ahead in the long line who, reaching the front and finding you behind them with only a single item and a look of quiet desperation, waved you ahead, and lost nothing they will remember, and gave you back a fragment of an afternoon you would otherwise have spent dissolving.

The mercy of the nurse on the night shift who, having no cure to offer and no time to spare, sat for ninety seconds on the edge of a frightened stranger's bed at three in the morning and held a hand, off the record, uncharted, in a hospital that does not bill for the one thing that helped.

The mercy of the person who noticed you had gone quiet in the loud group, and did not announce it, but caught your eye across the table and made, with their face alone, the small private sign that means: I see you; you are not as alone as you feel; stay.

The mercy of the stranger who told you your tag was sticking up, or your laces were undone, or there was spinach in your teeth — the small embarrassing rescues that one stranger performs for another out of nothing but the wish to spare a fellow creature a worse moment later, expecting no thanks and receiving, usually, only a flustered one.

The mercy of whoever first taught you that you were worth being kind to, so long ago you cannot remember the lesson, only the result: that you, too, became a person who holds doors,

a node in the mesh, a small dead patient generous animal building, without knowing it, the reef that holds the bright island up.

The mercy of the teacher who saw the child at the back of the room going quietly to pieces and did not call attention to it, but found a reason, the next day and the day after, to stand near that desk and to say, lightly, in passing, a single sentence that the child has carried for forty years and will carry to the grave and has never been able to repay, because the teacher never knew.

The mercy of the driver who waited the extra three seconds for the old man crossing slowly, and did not lean on the horn, and gave him with those three seconds a thing more valuable than the time: the sense, for one more crossing, that the city was willing to wait for him, that he had not yet become an obstacle, that he was still, at his pace, a person the lights would hold for.

The mercy of whoever it was that smiled at you — you, reading this, on some particular grey day you can no longer place — and meant nothing by it, and changed the whole afternoon, and walked on, never knowing, into a life you will never see, leaving you a little warmer in a way you could not have explained to anyone and did not try.

The mercy of the friend who texted, for no reason, on the very day, having no way of knowing it was the very day, the single line that kept the door of the evening from closing all the way.

The mercy of the busker who plays under the arch at midday not for the coins, which barely cover the strings, but because somewhere in the unhurried crowd there is always one person carrying something too heavy to carry, and music is a way of helping to carry it that asks no permission and keeps no record.

The mercy of the people, uncounted and uncountable, who have at some point chosen, in a small unwitnessed moment, to be slightly kinder than the situation required, when no one was watching and nothing was owed and there was nothing in it for them at all — and who have, by the sheer accumulated weight of all those unwitnessed choices, held the entire city up, the way a coral reef is built of small dead patient generous animals into a structure visible from the sky.

And the eleventh mercy, which the tomb saves for last and broadcasts most quietly, is this: that you, too, have done these things. You have held a door and forgotten it. You have said a sentence someone is still carrying. You have been, without ever being thanked and without ever knowing, an item on the list of small mercies that some other tired soul broadcasts to themselves on their own grey days to remember that the city is not only cruel. You are not merely a recipient of the mesh of kindness. You are load-bearing in it. The reef is built of you.

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There was, the tomb adds, once a man who came to the square in the certain belief that the world was a machine for grinding people down, and that kindness was a story the weak told to comfort themselves, and that he was a clear-eyed realist for believing it. He had a great deal of evidence. The clear-eyed always do; cruelty is loud and advertises itself, while mercy is quiet and keeps no record, and a man who tallies only what advertises itself will arrive, honestly and inevitably, at despair. He sat by the fountain at midday meaning only to rest, and the tomb began its list, and at first he scoffed, because each item was so small, so easily outweighed by the loud cruelties he could name. But the list went on. The list does not stop. And somewhere around the four hundredth small mercy, the man understood the trick the tomb was playing on his arithmetic: that he had been weighing one loud cruelty against one quiet kindness and calling it a fair scale, when the truth was that for every cruelty loud enough to be counted there were a thousand mercies too quiet to register, holding the city up from underneath, uncounted, the way the dark patient mass of a reef holds up the bright noisy island that takes all the credit. He had been a realist about a tenth of reality. The tomb gave him the other nine.

He left the square that midday a changed accountant, the Bureau records, and became, in his remaining years, a quiet adder to the list rather than a clear-eyed tallier of its absence, which is the only conversion the Tomb of Small Mercies has ever sought to produce. It does not ask you to believe the world is kind. It asks you only to count more honestly — to weigh the loud cruelty against not one kindness but against the true and uncountable sum of them — and to notice, having counted, that you have been undercounting your whole life the very thing that has, the whole time, been holding you up.

PLATE VIII

The Tomb of Laughter That Surprises Grief

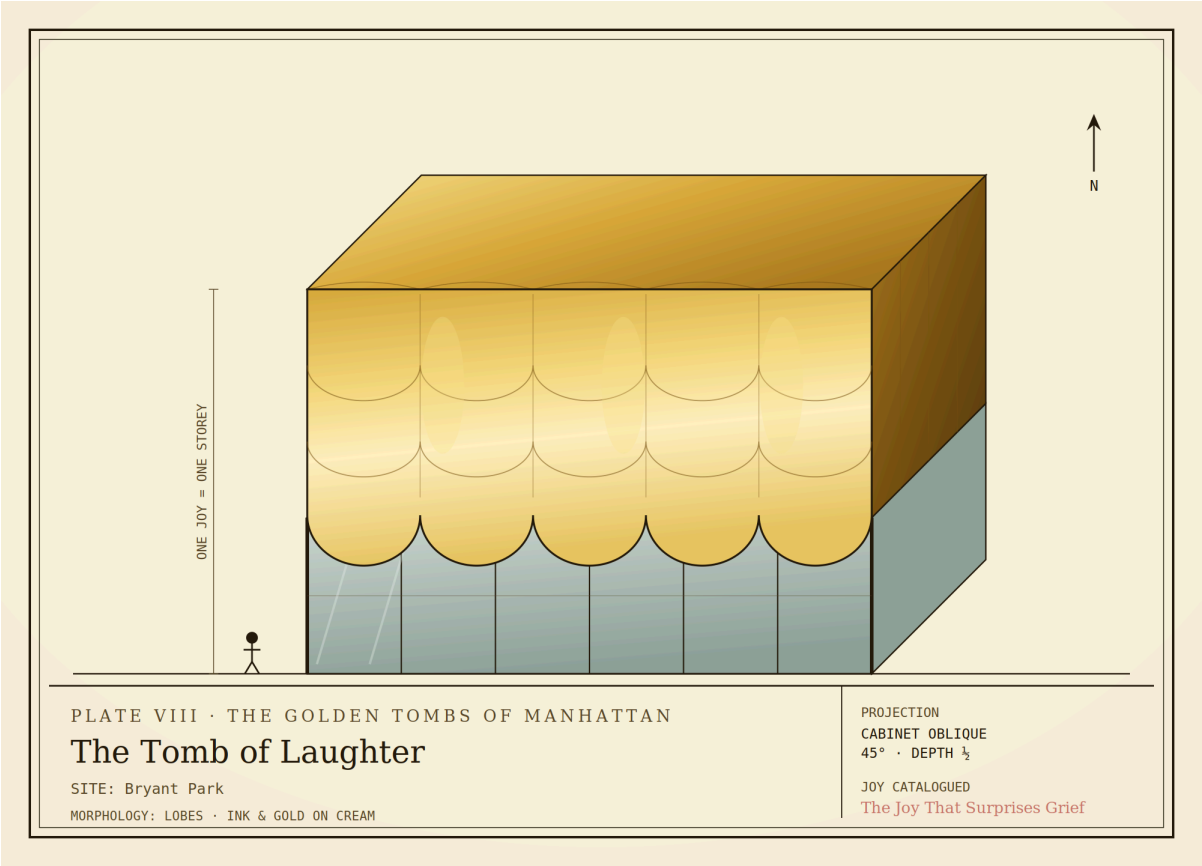

Plate VIII. The Tomb of Laughter, Bryant Park. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The fullest and roundest lobes of the series, drawn at the moment of their loudest inflation; the building, the cartographers reported, appears to be on the verge of laughing, and they let the drawing keep that look.

Behind the Great Library, on the lawn that fills at lunchtime with the whole working city eating sandwiches in the open air, beside the small painted carousel that turns for children and, late at night, for adults who have remembered they were children, Surjan built the roundest tomb of the ten. The Tomb of Laughter swells into the fullest lobes in the series, and the cartographers, drawing it at the moment of its loudest inflation, reported that the building appeared to be on the verge of laughing, and were given permission to let the drawing keep that look. It is the only architectural plate in the Bureau's collection that is, unmistakably, about to lose its composure.

The joy it broadcasts is the most paradoxical of the ten, and the one Surjan was proudest of having found a building for, because most people do not know it is a joy at all and many are ashamed of it when it comes. It is the laughter that surprises grief. The helpless, holy, scandalous laughter that breaks out, unbidden and unstoppable, in the very middle of

mourning — at the wake, in the hospital corridor, at the graveside itself — and that the laugher always, always apologises for, believing it a betrayal of the grief, when it is in fact, the tomb insists, the grief's own twin, born of the same love, arriving to keep the griever alive through the part that would otherwise be unsurvivable.

It broadcasts in the early evening, when the lawn empties of the working day and fills with a softer crowd, and it tells a story that is, by the Bureau's measure, the funniest in the whole catalogue and also the saddest, the two being, in this tomb above all, impossible to separate. Here is the story the Tomb of Laughter tells, on the lawn behind the library, in the early evening, as its lobes swell toward the edge of breaking.

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At the funeral of a man much loved, the family had arranged everything with the dignity the occasion demanded. There were the right flowers and the right music and the right sombre faces, and the widow sat in the front row holding herself together by an act of will that everyone present could feel, like a held breath that had lasted three days. The man had been enormous in life — loud, warm, ridiculous, the kind of man who filled a room and broke things in it — and the careful dignity of the service fit him about as well as a borrowed suit fits a bear, but grief had insisted on the dignity, and the family had complied, and the whole company sat stiff and aching under the weight of a solemnity the dead man would have heckled.

And then, during the most sacred silence of the service, at the exact moment of maximum solemnity, the recorded music — which the funeral home had cued with great care — malfunctioned, and instead of the intended hymn there blared out, at full volume, into the hushed and weeping room, the opening bars of a particular disco song of monumental and undignified silliness, a song the dead man had loved without irony and had danced to, badly, at every wedding for forty years, clearing the floor not because he was good but because his joy was so total and so graceless that it could not be looked away from.

There was a frozen instant of horror. The funeral director lunged for the controls. And the widow — the widow who had not breathed properly in three days, who had held herself together by pure will through every arrangement — the widow put her face in her hands, and her shoulders began to shake, and everyone thought she had finally broken, and reached toward her, and she lowered her hands to reveal that she was laughing. Helplessly. Hopelessly. Tears streaming, gasping for air, pointing weakly at the speaker, laughing the way you laugh perhaps three times in a life, from a place so deep it has no bottom — because it was him, it was exactly and entirely him, that this and only this song should be the one to crash a funeral he had no doubt arranged the malfunction from wherever he now was, purely to clear the floor one last time, to break the borrowed dignity over his knee, to insist, even dead, especially dead, that they remember not the loss of him but the ridiculous graceless

total joy of him, the man who could not be solemn to save his life and would not be solemned over in his death.

And the laughter spread, the way it does, the way it must, until the whole room that had been suffocating under three days of dignity was suddenly, scandalously, gloriously laughing and weeping at once, the two so braided that no one could have said where the one ended and the other began, the widow loudest of all, and someone, finally, turned the music up instead of off, and the funeral became, for four undignified minutes, the thing the man had always made of every room he entered: a dance floor, cleared by joy, in his honour.

The Bureau has collected, over the years, a great many such accounts, for the laughter that surprises grief is far commoner than its sufferers believe, each of them imagining their own graveside fit of giggling to be a unique disgrace. There is the brother who lost the thread of the eulogy entirely because a phone in the third row played, of all things, a comedy ringtone, and who stood at the lectern shaking until he had to confess to the room that the deceased would have found this the single funniest thing to occur at any funeral in the history of the world, at which the room agreed, audibly, and was healed by a fraction. There is the daughter who, carrying the urn, was struck by the sudden absurd thought of her father's lifelong complaints about being kept waiting, and laughed aloud at the idea of him impatient even now, even as ash, even in her hands, tapping his foot to get on with eternity. The accounts differ in every particular and agree in the one thing that matters: that the laughter came uninvited, from the deepest place, and that it did not insult the dead but, somehow, restored them — turned them for a moment from a loss being mourned back into a person being known.

This is the deeper turn the tomb saves for those who linger past the first relief, the ones still half-convinced that their laughter was a lapse. Solemnity, the tomb says, swelling toward the edge of its composure, is what we offer the dead when we have begun, already, to forget them — when they have become an occasion, a role, a deceased, a thing the proper faces are arranged around. But laughter is what we offer them while we still have them whole, while the particular ridiculous graceless texture of exactly this person and no other is still vivid enough to ambush us. The mourner who laughs has not stopped grieving; the mourner who laughs is grieving more accurately than the one who only weeps, because they are grieving the actual person, with their actual absurdities, and not the marble abstraction the funeral is trying to make of them. To laugh at the graveside is to insist that the dead were funny, were specific, were alive, and that you will not let the borrowed dignity of death file down the edges of who they really were. It is the last and most loyal act of attention, and it is grief at its most clear-eyed, and the tomb will not let you apologise for it.

Here is the line the Tomb of Laughter broadcasts at the height of its loudest inflation, the line it exists to give to everyone who has ever apologised for laughing at a graveside. The laughter was not a betrayal of the grief. The laughter was the grief, turned for one merciful moment to its other face. You do not laugh that hard, from that deep, at a funeral, unless you

loved that much; the laugh and the loss are drawn from the same well, and the well is love, and a love great enough to break your heart is a love great enough to break you up laughing, and the one is the proof of the other. The dignity was the borrowed suit. The laughter was the man. Grief that cannot laugh has not finished loving; it has only finished breathing. And the surprising, scandalous, holy laughter that ambushes you in the worst hour is not the enemy of your mourning. It is your mourning's twin, sent in at the unsurvivable moment to do the one thing solemnity cannot, which is to keep you alive, and laughing, and therefore still, somewhere under the tears, in love.

This is why the roundest tomb stands behind the library, beside the carousel, on the lawn where the whole city comes to eat in the open and, in the early evening, to be a little less careful than the day required. People come to it carrying grief they have been holding with great dignity for a long time, and the tomb, swelling toward the edge of its own composure, gives them permission — permission to remember the ridiculous graceless joy of whoever they have lost, permission to let the held breath go, permission to laugh until they weep and weep until they laugh and stop pretending the two were ever separate. They leave lighter, and a little embarrassed, and entirely unashamed, which is the exact condition the dead man achieved on every dance floor of his life. The carousel turns. The lobes swell. The building is always, eternally, about to lose its composure, and inviting you, in the early evening, to lose yours, in honour of everyone you have loved enough to laugh about at the worst possible moment, which is the best possible proof that you loved them at all.

Surjan and the Island: The Fourth Conversation

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THE ISLAND. *Eight. You have given my old monastery a body, my most crowded square a list, and my library lawn a fit of laughter at a funeral. I will admit something, weather-person, and you will not let it go to your head: people walk over me differently since you began. Lighter. They look up. I had forgotten what the tops of their heads looked like turned to the sky instead of the pavement.*

SURJAN. *That is the whole engineering. Everything else is gold and warm air.*

THE ISLAND. *Two left. And I think I know what they are. You have done beginning, encounter, the body. There is only one country you have not built in. The one I am most made of. The one under all my streets.*

SURJAN. *Release. Yes. The last two are about letting go — the small daily letting-go of fear, and the last great letting-go of all, which is mine. I have been putting them off. Even I, who refuse the boxes, have been walking the long way round the last two tombs.*

THE ISLAND. *You are afraid.*

SURJAN. *Of course I am afraid. I never said radical joy was the absence of fear. I said it was the coat turned gold-side out. I am terrified, and I am going to do it anyway, gold-side out, broadcasting the whole way down. Take me to the railway in the air. Take me to where the city learned to walk on nothing and found it could be done.*

❦ ❦ ❦

Suite the Fourth

The Tombs of Release

The last two tombs are about letting go: the small, daily, unclenching of the hand that fear keeps closed, and the last great letting-go of all, which is the one Surjan walked the long way round and then, gold-side out, walked into. They stand at the western edge and the southern tip, the two places where the island stops being itself and becomes air, or water, or the wide world beyond. It is fitting that the catalogue of joy should end at the edges, because release is the joy that happens precisely where you run out of ground, and discover that running out of ground was never the catastrophe you spent your life bracing for.

PLATE IX

The Tomb of the Last Fear Released

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ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE IX · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of the Last Fear Released
SITE: The High Line, Chelsea
MORPHOLOGY: PLEATS · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy of the Opened Hand

Plate IX. The Tomb of the Last Fear Released, the High Line. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The hem falls in fine draped points, like a hand opening; the tomb stands on the old elevated railway, thirty feet above the street, and the cartographers drew it from the level of the walkway, so that for once the visitor and the tomb stand on the same impossible ground.

On the west side of the island there runs, thirty feet above the street, a railway in the air. It was built to carry freight — heavy things, clenched and bound, hauled through the city's chest at second-storey height so they would not have to fight the traffic below. For decades it carried its burdens, and then it stopped, and stood empty and rusting and full of self-sown wildflowers, and the city, in a fit of the very joy this catalogue exists to document, declined to tear it down and instead made of it a garden you can walk through in the air, among the grasses and the late flowers, between the buildings, above the hurrying street, on the very rails that once carried the heaviest freight in the city and now carry only strollers and lovers and the slow astonished elderly and the wind. Surjan loved this transformation past all the others, because it was the city itself, with no help from any tomb, performing the exact

miracle the tombs were built to teach: taking the thing that had carried the heaviest burdens, and opening it, and filling it with flowers, and learning to walk on it as on nothing at all.

On this railway in the air Surjan set the second-to-last tomb, dressed in gold that falls in fine draped points, like the fingers of a hand opening. The cartographers, for the only time in the series, drew it not from the ground but from the level of the walkway, so that in Plate IX the visitor and the tomb stand, for once, on the same impossible ground, thirty feet up, on rails built for freight, among flowers, on nothing. It broadcasts at the blue hour, dusk and dawn both, the two times the light is uncertain and a person walking on air is most aware of the air, and it tells the story of the opened hand.

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There was a person who lived with their hand closed. Not the body's hand — though that too, often, was clenched in sleep — but the deeper hand, the one the soul grips with. They had learned, early and well, that the world was a place of loss, and that the only defence against loss was to hold on: to hold tight to what they had, to what they loved, to what they feared to lose, to control and certainty and safety and the known. They held tight to relationships, and squeezed the life from them. They held tight to plans, and could not bear it when the world declined to follow them. They held tight to old wounds, because a grudge, gripped hard enough, feels like justice. They held tight, above all, to the ground — to the solid known ground of the life they had, refusing every railway in the air, every flowering risk, every chance that required them to step off the certain and onto the unknown, because the unknown might mean falling, and falling was the one thing the closed hand existed to prevent.

And it worked, in the way that fear's strategies always work, which is to say it succeeded perfectly at its stated goal and failed entirely at the goal beneath it. The closed hand did keep them safe. It also kept them empty. For here is the thing about a clenched fist that the person did not understand until late, walking the railway in the air at the blue hour: a closed hand cannot drop anything, this is true, but a closed hand also cannot receive anything, and cannot hold another hand, and cannot feel the wind, and cannot be filled. The fist that will not let go is the same fist that cannot take hold. In defending against loss they had defended, with equal and unintended efficiency, against gift. Nothing could be taken from them. Nothing could be given to them either. They had made of their own soul a sealed and burglar-proof room, and had achieved, at last, the perfect security of having nothing left in it worth stealing.

What changed them was the railway in the air. They had refused it for years — a walkway thirty feet up, on old rusting rails, with nothing underneath but the drop; everything the closed hand most feared. But one blue evening, for reasons they could not name, tired perhaps of the burglar-proof room, they climbed the stairs and stepped out onto the line, and gripped the railing with their body's clenched hand, and stood rigid, thirty feet above the

certain ground, terrified, among the flowers. And the tomb began to broadcast, in gold falling like fingers opening, the one thing the fearful most need and least believe.

You think the fear is protecting you, it told them, in the uncertain light. You think the clench is a fortress. But look at your hand on that railing. The fear has not made you safe; it has made you unable to move, thirty feet up, gripping a rail, while all around you people walk freely on the same impossible ground, among the same flowers, above the same drop, and are not falling, because the walking is not the danger; the walking was never the danger; the danger you have feared your whole life is the falling, and the falling is not happening, has almost never happened, is the one disaster your entire clenched life has been organised around and which has, in fact, scarcely once arrived. You have paid the full price of falling, every day, for decades, in advance, in the currency of the clenched hand — and you have never once actually fallen. You have bought, at ruinous and lifelong cost, insurance against a catastrophe that was mostly never going to come, and the premium was everything: every gift you could not receive, every hand you could not hold, every flowering railway in the air you could not walk because you were too busy gripping the ground.

And then the tomb gave them the line it falls in points like an opening hand in order to give. Open your hand, it said. Not because there is nothing to fear — there is; you may fall; the drop is real; release is not the denial of the drop. Open your hand because the opened hand is the only hand that can do the two things that make a life worth the fear: it can let go of what is finished, and it can receive what is coming. The closed fist can do neither. The opened hand can do both. Yes, an open hand might drop something. An open hand might also, for the first time in your guarded life, be filled — with another hand, with the wind off the river, with the late flowers, with the whole astonishing world you have been holding at arm's length by holding everything else too tight. The last fear to release is the fear of releasing. Open the hand that grips the rail. You will not fall. And even if, someday, in the last and largest letting-go, you do — you will fall, the tomb said, the way I am teaching this whole city to fall, which is not down but outward, gold-side out, broadcasting the whole way, into the air you were always, secretly, able to walk on.

The person opened their hand. They let go of the railing, there on the railway in the air, thirty feet above the certain ground, among the flowers, at the blue hour, and they did not fall. They stood on nothing, freely, for the first time, with both hands open — and the wind came, and filled them, and they understood, far too late and exactly in time, that the ground they had spent a life refusing to leave had never been the only ground, that there was ground in the air, ground in risk, ground in the opened hand, and that they had been, all those clenched and burglar-proof years, not safe, merely stationary, which is the one form of falling no one ever recognises as falling, because it happens so slowly and so completely and so much like staying still.

The Bureau wishes to make explicit the lesson the railway in the air teaches simply by existing, the lesson Surjan loved past all the others because the city had learned it without

being told. Here was a structure built for the heaviest, most clenched, most bound and burdened freight the city produced — a thing whose entire purpose was holding tight to enormous weights and hauling them through the air. And when its working life ended, the city did not tear it down, nor did it return the structure to carrying freight, which would have been the sensible and burden-minded thing. The city opened it. It let the freight rails fill with self-sown wildflowers, with grasses gone to seed, with the unplanned green that arrives wherever human grip relaxes, and then it invited the people up to walk among them, thirty feet above the street, on nothing, for no reason but the joy of it. The most clenched structure in the city became its most open one. The carrier of the heaviest burdens became the place you go to feel light. This is the parable in steel, and the tomb only completes it, in gold, by saying aloud what the railway says in flowers: that the way to redeem a life spent gripping is not to grip something better but to open the hand and let the unplanned green come in.

The tomb also teaches, for those who cannot yet imagine the last great release, the small daily ones that are its rehearsal, and the Bureau sets down the catalogue it broadcasts at the blue hour, that you may practise. The release of the last word in the argument, dropped unspoken, because being right was costing more than it was worth. The release of the plan the world declined to follow, set down so that the actual unplanned day may be received. The release of the grudge, opened like a fist, revealing the palm to have been cramped and empty the whole time it was clenched in triumph. The release of the outcome, of the need to know how it ends, of the insistence that the future submit to your design before you will agree to walk into it. The release of the self you were at twenty-two, whom you have been carrying, rigid and unchanged, as the one fixed weight in a changing life. Each of these is a small opening of the hand, a minor walking-on-air, a rehearsal at thirty feet for the day you walk on nothing at all — and the person who has practised the small releases, the tomb promises, will find the last one not a catastrophe but a familiar motion, the opening of a hand that has, by then, learned what hands are for.

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Those who come to this tomb are the frightened, which is to say nearly everyone, since fear wears so many respectable suits — caution, realism, responsibility, the sensible refusal of the railway in the air — that most of its sufferers do not know they are afraid, only that their hands are tired from gripping and their souls are oddly empty for all they have held so carefully. They walk out onto the line, thirty feet up, among the flowers, and the tomb falls above them in points like opening fingers, and it teaches them the small daily release that is the rehearsal for the last one: open the hand, drop what is finished, receive what is coming, walk the air. They go back down to the certain ground changed, with their hands a little looser, having learned on a railway built for the heaviest freight that the way to carry a life is not to clench it but to open it, and that the city itself, thirty feet over their heads, has been

demonstrating this for years, having taken its greatest burden-carrier and filled it with flowers and learned, in plain public view, to walk on air.

PLATE X

The Tomb of the Broadcast

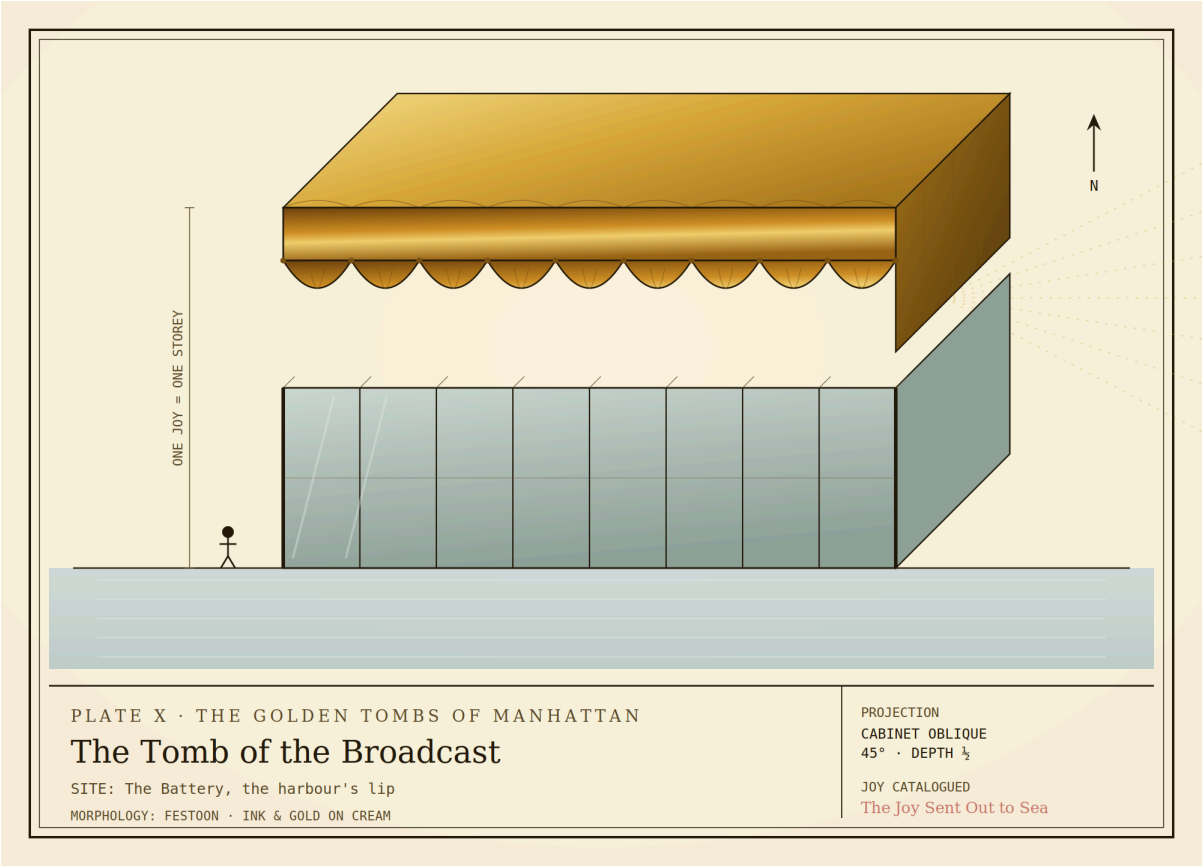
N
ONE JOY = ONE STOREY
PLATE X · THE GOLDEN TOMBS OF MANHATTAN
The Tomb of the Broadcast
SITE: The Battery, the harbour's lip
MORPHOLOGY: FESTOON · INK & GOLD ON CREAM
PROJECTION
CABINET OBLIQUE
45° · DEPTH ½
JOY CATALOGUED
The Joy Sent Out to Sea

Plate X. The Tomb of the Broadcast, the Battery. Cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. The southernmost and last; its gold carries the rose lining of all the others gathered into one, and the cartographers drew it facing the open water, where the island ends and the broadcast goes out, past the lady in the harbour, to the whole arriving and departing world.

At the southern tip, where the two rivers give up their separate names and become the harbour, and the harbour gives up its name and becomes the sea, and the sea gives up every name there is and becomes the world — at the very lip of the island, facing the open water and the lady who stands in it holding up her light to everyone arriving and everyone leaving, Surjan built the last tomb. It is the southernmost and the largest, and its gold carries, gathered into one, the rose lining of all the others, so that to stand beneath it is to stand beneath the whole series at once, every species of joy in a single skin. The cartographers drew it facing the water, where the island ends and the broadcast goes out — not across the rooftops only, like the other nine, but past the lady in the harbour, over the open sea, to the whole arriving and departing world. This is the Tomb of the Broadcast, and it is the one

Surjan went into, which is to say the one Surjan came out of, which is to say the one you are reading from now.

It broadcasts at all hours and in all weathers, because it does not tell a story so much as send one. The other nine each keep a single joy. This one keeps the act of keeping itself — the broadcast, the sending, the turning of a private gladness into a public light. And the story it sends, over and over, past the lady and out to sea, is the story of how the catalogue you are holding came to be told at all, which is the story of Surjan's last and largest refusal.

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You have read, the tomb sends, the stories of the nine. The woman who woke glad for no reason. The clerk who became the someone the language had to stretch to hold. The stranger in the rising box at the hinge of his life. The brother on the far side of the silence. The face in the great still water, beloved and unbelieving. The body, holy and faithful and at war for fifty years. The list of small mercies that holds the city up from underneath. The widow laughing at the funeral she had no doubt arranged. The hand, opening, on the railway in the air. You have read all nine, and you have perhaps wondered, as readers do, who is telling them, and where the teller has got to, and why a book of such relentless gladness should be built in the shape of a graveyard.

Here is the answer, the tomb sends, out past the lady, over the water, to wherever you are. The teller is not gone. The teller is here, and here, and here — at the head of the island where the morning gets here first, on the plaza where the larva suspects its wings, in the wood where the strangers are already beloved, on the street where the years are the long way home, at the water that doubles the beloved face, among the stones where the body is the holy thing, under the arch where the small mercies hold up the world, behind the library where the laughter surprises the grief, on the railway where the hand learns to open. The teller is distributed. The teller chose, at the last, the thing they had chosen at every turn of their life: not the box, but the refusal of the box; not to be kept, but to be sent; not to go into the ground, faithfully tended and quietly mourned, but to go out, gold-side out, across the rooftops and over the water and into the whole world, as weather, as light, as a low gold humming the sleepless can follow home.

I told the Island, the tomb sends, in the voice that is Surjan's and is also the wind's, that I would not lose my nerve at the last and largest box, and I want you to know that I very nearly did. Even refusing the boxes is harder at the end, when the box is so final and so reasonable and everyone you love is standing around it weeping and asking you, with their grief, to please just get in, so that they will know where you are. It would have been a kindness to get in. It would have given them an address for their sorrow, a stone to bring flowers to, a place to be sad in on the anniversary. I thought about it. I am not made of courage; I am made of the same fear as everyone, turned, with great effort, gold-side out. But I had spent a whole life arguing that joy belongs in public, on a scale you cannot ignore, available to the tired and the

frightened and the not-yet-themselves, and I could not, at the end, make my own death the one private thing, the one box, the one stone in a quiet field where joy is not allowed to be loud. So I did the only thing consistent with everything I had ever said. I asked to be broadcast. I asked to be turned, like all the rest, gold-side out, and sent.

And here is what I have learned, the tomb sends, that I could not have learned any other way, and that I send to you now past the lady's light, over the open water, to the whole arriving and departing world. It does not hurt. The letting-go I feared my whole life, the falling, the dispersal, the loss of the clenched and certain self — it is not the catastrophe the closed hand spends a life bracing for. It is the railway in the air. You do not fall down. You fall outward. You become, at last and all at once, the size you always secretly were, which is the size of everyone you ever loved and every morning you ever woke glad in and every stranger you ever failed to see and every small mercy you ever did without being thanked. I am not less, now, distributed. I am more. I am the whole island's weather. I am the brightest thing on eight million horizons. And the only grief left in me — for there is one, the tomb sends, even gold-side out there is one — is for the people I love, who would have liked an address, and who must make do instead with the whole bright sky, and learn, as I am asking the whole city to learn, to look up for me, and find me there, everywhere it is bright, broadcasting, not gone, never gone, only at last too large to be kept in any single place, including, my loves, including a body, including a name, including a grave.

I chose the harbour, the tomb sends, because the harbour is the one place on the island that has always understood arrival and departure to be the same event seen from two sides. Watch the ferries. Watch the freighters low in the water with the goods of the whole earth. Watch, if you are here at the right hour, the great slow ships that still bring people — fewer now, but still, always, some — to the lip of the island for the first time, scanning the skyline the way the people on the street uptown scan the crowd, looking for the future the way the others look for a face. Every one of them is both leaving everything and arriving at everything, in the same breath, on the same deck, and the lady stands in the water holding up her light to all of them without distinguishing the comers from the goers, because to her, as to the harbour, as now to me, there is no difference worth marking. I am leaving the island and arriving at the world in the same dispersal. I am the departing freighter and the arriving immigrant and the lady's lifted light, all three, and the grief and the joy of it are, like everything else at the harbour's lip, the single event seen from two sides.

And so I send this last thing, the tomb sends, out past the lady, over the open water, to you who are reading at whatever edge you have reached. Do not mistake the shape of this book for its meaning. It is built like a catalogue of tombs, in cabinet oblique, with a map and a plate list and all the dry apparatus of the museum, because I wanted to smuggle the most undisciplined thing in the world — joy, radical and public and impossible to lose — past the customs of a serious century, and the only way to smuggle joy past the serious is to dress it in the uniform of the serious, to give it footnotes and dimensions and a colophon, and trust that

the reader will feel, under the dry gold drape of the catalogue, the warm rose lining of the actual argument, which is not an argument at all but an invitation, and not even an invitation, finally, but a hand, opened, held out across the water, asking you the only question the whole apparatus was ever built to ask, which is: how have you been, and will you, now, at last, look up?

So do not bring me flowers, the tomb sends, to the southern tip, over the water, to the world. Bring me your upturned faces. Walk toward the brightest thing on your horizon and let it be me, or let it be you, it no longer matters which, that was always the secret the boxes were built to keep from you: that the teller and the told, the broadcaster and the broadcast, the weather and the ones who walk under it looking up, were never as separate as the grammar pretended. I dissolved into the broadcast. So can you. That is not a threat and it is not only a death; it is an instruction, and it is the last and largest joy, and the afterword that follows these plates will tell you, plainly and in order, how it is done.

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This is the last of the ten, and the largest, at the lip of the island where everything gives up its name and becomes the world. It sends its broadcast out past the lady in the harbour at all hours and in all weathers, to the ferries and the freighters and the immigrants and the tourists and the gulls and the whole arriving and departing earth, and what it sends is not grief, though it was built where a person was lost, and not a story, though it holds them all, but an invitation, gold-side out, over the open water: that joy is meant to be public, and large, and impossible to lose; that the tellers are not gone but distributed, weather now, light now, a humming the sleepless follow home; and that you, reading this at the edge of the island or the edge of the world or the edge of some grief of your own, are not only permitted but expected, when your time comes, to refuse the box, and to ask, as Surjan asked, gold-side out, terrified, and doing it anyway: not to be kept, but to be sent.

Surjan and the Island: The Last Conversation

THE ISLAND. *Ten. They are all built, and you are inside them, and outside them, and you are, I notice, harder to talk to now — your voice comes from everywhere, which is a great deal more annoying than when it came from a person with finished shoes.*

SURJAN. *I am sorry for the shoes. I am sorry for the weeping at the box. I am not sorry for the rest.*

THE ISLAND. *I have held everything, weather-person. I told you that the first night, when you came walking with your measuring. The forest and the fires and the towers and the water and more grief than you had words for. And I will tell you now the thing I did not tell you then, because you had not earned it and now you have. In all the centuries I have held, you are the first thing I have been asked to hold that insisted on being joy. Grief I am paved in. Joy is the new construction. It is not what islands are for. And it is, I find, to my considerable surprise, the only tenant that has ever made the rent feel like anything other than theft.*

SURJAN. *Then keep them lit. That is all I ask. When I forget myself, as even weather forgets itself, keep them lit, and keep the lids off, and keep the faces turned up. The catalogue will help. People believe a thing more if it has been properly drawn.*

THE ISLAND. *I will keep them lit. Go on, then. Be everywhere it is bright. I have a great many tired people walking over me this morning with their faces toward the pavement, and exactly ten reasons, now, for them to look up. Go and be the brightest of them. I will hold the rest.*

Appendix

A Gazetteer of Apocryphal Tombs

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Ten tombs were built. Many more were proposed, dreamed, sketched on napkins, demanded by petition, or simply rumoured into a kind of half-existence by people who were sure they had stood beneath them. The Bureau keeps a file of these, the apocryphal tombs, the ones that were never raised, and offers a selection here, partly out of completeness and partly because Surjan held that a city is built as much from the joys it failed to enshrine as from the ones it managed. Each entry records the joy the tomb would have kept, and, where it is known, the reason the tomb was never built — for the reasons, the Bureau has found, are frequently the most joyful part.

The Tomb of the Word in Another Language for Which There Is No English. It would have kept the joy of feelings too precise to be said in one's own tongue — the particular gladness of borrowed words that fit a corner of the heart the mother language left bare. It was never built because the committee could not agree which untranslatable word to inscribe over the door, each member insisting, in their grandmother's language, on a different one, until they realised the argument itself was the monument, and went to lunch, reconciled, in four languages.

The Tomb of the Afternoon Nap. It would have broadcast the joy of sleep stolen in daylight, the guiltless twenty minutes that repair a whole afternoon. Construction was abandoned when it was discovered that everyone assigned to build it kept falling asleep on site, in the warm gold shade of the half-raised skin, and waking refreshed, and going home, having proved the building's thesis so thoroughly that the building became redundant.

The Tomb of the Smell of Rain on Hot Pavement. It would have kept petrichor, the joy that rises off summer stone at the first drops, older than memory and impossible to summon at will. It was not built because the Bureau could not decide whether to build it for the rain or for the pavement, and because, every time they came near a decision, it rained, and they all went out to stand in it instead, which is, the file notes, the correct response and arguably the tomb already.

The Tomb of Being Wrong. It would have broadcast the underrated joy of changing one's mind — the lightness that follows when a long-defended position is at last set down. It could not be built because everyone involved was certain of the design, and the only person who proposed an alternative was, by the building's own logic, the only one fit to build it, and they had by then changed their mind about wanting to.

The Tomb of Found Money in an Old Coat. It would have kept the small clean windfall joy of a forgotten twenty in a winter pocket — money you already owned, returned to you

by your own past self as a gift across time. It was never built because the funds allocated for it were, with a symmetry the Bureau found unanswerable, discovered to have been left in the pocket of a coat, and spent, gladly, on lunch for strangers.

The Tomb of the Dog Who Waited at the Window. It would have broadcast the joy of being awaited — the whole-body gladness of a creature who has spent the entire day believing, against all evidence, that you would come back, and is proven right. It was not raised because no architect could draw a building as glad to see you as a dog is, and Surjan refused to accept a design that fell short of the brief.

The Tomb of the First Snow. It would have kept the hush and wonder of the year's first snow, in the brief hour before the city greys it — the joy that makes adults stop on the sidewalk and tilt their faces up like children. It was abandoned because it could only be built in that one hour, and every winter the builders, arriving with their materials, found themselves instead standing still with their faces tilted up, having become the thing they came to make.

The Tomb of the Phone Call That Was Not Bad News. It would have broadcast the flood of relief when the ringing phone, braced for catastrophe, turns out to be someone calling only to say they were thinking of you. It was never built; the Bureau kept meaning to begin, but every time they reached for the plans the phone rang, and it was good news, and they forgot the plans in the gladness, which the file records as a complete success.

The Tomb of the Empty Subway Car at Rush Hour. It would have kept the furtive, faintly guilty joy of the impossible — a whole empty car arriving at the most crowded hour, yours alone, a small miracle the city is not supposed to permit. It could not be built because no one could explain how the miracle worked, and a tomb to an unexplained mercy felt, to the engineers, like tempting it, and they let it remain wild.

The Tomb of the Reconciled Argument. It would have broadcast the particular sweetness on the far side of a fight with someone you love — the tenderness that is somehow larger after the rupture than before it, the relief of the held hand returned. A site was chosen and a quarrel broke out over it among the planners, who then reconciled so movingly that they declared the reconciliation itself the monument and disbanded, friends.

The Tomb of the Song You Forgot You Knew. It would have kept the joy of a melody surfacing whole after thirty years, every word intact, summoned by nothing, proving the mind keeps gladness in deeper vaults than it admits. It was not built because the moment the planners hummed the example song to one another, they all knew it, and sang it, badly, in a stairwell, and went home satisfied that the vault was secure.

The Tomb of the Word "Yet". It would have broadcast the small architectural miracle of a single syllable that turns a sentence of despair into a sentence of hope: I cannot do this — yet. It was never raised because the Bureau kept saying they had not built it yet, and

found, in saying so, that they had already enshrined the word in the only place it lives, which is the mouth of a person not finished trying.

The Tomb of the Stranger's Umbrella. It would have kept the joy of being tilted under a stranger's umbrella at a crossing in the rain, the wordless brief shelter offered and accepted between people who will never meet again. It was not built because every prototype, left out in the weather to be tested, was carried off by someone sheltering a stranger, which the Bureau ruled was the umbrella performing its function and declined to prosecute.

The Tomb of the Plant That Did Not Die. It would have broadcast the disproportionate pride of keeping a green thing alive through a hard winter — the joy of stewardship rewarded, of a small life sustained by your unreliable care. It remains unbuilt; the commemorative plant placed at the proposed site thrived so vigorously, untended, that the Bureau concluded the site preferred to make the point itself, and let it grow.

The Tomb of the Green Lights All the Way. It would have kept the rare, undeserved, gliding joy of every signal turning green as you reach it, the city briefly conspiring to wave you through. It could not be built because the building of it would have required closing several streets, turning every light red for months, which the planners found too bitter an irony, and so they let the joy stay rare, which is, they admitted, the secret of it.

The Tomb of the Forgiven Self. It would have broadcast the hardest-won joy of all — the day you finally extend to your own past self the mercy you have always extended freely to others, and set down a debt you have been paying with interest for years. The Bureau began it many times and abandoned it many times, which they came to understand was not failure but the very subject, self-forgiveness being a thing one is always beginning again, and they left the foundation open, in case you need it.

The Tomb of the Unexpected Day Off. It would have kept the schoolchild's pure joy of the cancelled day — snow on the radio, the long ordained hours suddenly handed back, time turned from a sentence into a gift. It was not built because the day chosen for the groundbreaking was itself cancelled, by snow, and the Bureau, given the hours back, spent them sledding, and counted the project complete.

The Tomb of the Right Word Arriving Just in Time. It would have broadcast the joy of the word you needed appearing on your tongue at the exact moment the conversation required it — the mind's small grace under pressure. It was never built; the Bureau, attempting to describe the joy for the plaque, kept failing to find the right word, and then, just in time, found it, and the plaque was all they made, and it was enough.

The Tomb of the Held Hand in the Dark Theatre. It would have kept the joy of a hand finding yours in the dark when the film turns frightening or sad — sought without looking, given without a word, the whole of companionship in five fingers. It was not built because the dark required for it could not be guaranteed in a public building, and Surjan

refused to enshrine in light a joy that lives by touch in the dark, and let it remain where it belongs, in every theatre, free.

The Tomb of the Letter That Crossed the Ocean. It would have broadcast the joy of slow correspondence — a letter written by hand, carried by water, arriving weeks later still smelling faintly of another country and another desk. It remains unbuilt because the design was mailed to the planning office by sea, for authenticity, and has not yet arrived, and the Bureau waits for it happily, having decided the waiting is the point.

The Tomb of the Cat Choosing Your Lap. It would have kept the absurd, undeserved honour of being selected, out of all available surfaces, by a creature who owes you nothing and has decided, for reasons of its own, that you will do. It was not built because the cat brought in to consult on the design chose, instead of any of the proposed sites, the lap of the senior planner, who could not then rise to vote, and the meeting was adjourned, and never reconvened, the matter having settled itself.

The Tomb of the Pun So Bad It Becomes Good. It would have broadcast the groan that turns helplessly into a laugh — the joy of language misbehaving so thoroughly that delight overrules judgement. It could not be built because every name proposed for it was a pun, and each was rejected as too bad, until one was so bad that the entire committee laughed, and the laughter disqualified their judgement, and they adjourned, defeated and delighted, which is the only correct response to a sufficiently bad pun.

The Tomb of the Stranger Who Sang on the Platform. It would have kept the joy of unbidden public music — the voice that rises, unembarrassed, in a tiled underground station, and turns a grim commute, for the length of one song, into a shared and secret concert. It was not built because the busker engaged to model for it drew, by singing, a crowd so glad that the platform itself became the monument, nightly, for free, and a built tomb seemed a poor and silent substitute.

The Tomb of the Last Bite, Saved and Then Eaten. It would have broadcast the small disciplined joy of the best bite kept for the end — the delayed and deliberate gratification of a person who trusts the future enough to save the good part for it. It remains unbuilt because the model meal prepared for the dedication was so good that no one saved the last bite, every planner eating greedily and at once, thereby disproving the thesis and proving a better one, which is that joy deferred is sometimes joy declined, and that the future is not always owed the best bite.

The Tomb of the Nickname Only One Person Uses. It would have kept the small warm secret of being called, by a single person in all the world, a name that no one else knows and that means, in its whole private etymology, you are mine and I am glad of it. It was never built because the Bureau could not inscribe the name on the door without making it public, and a nickname made public is a nickname killed, and so the joy was left where it lives, in the mouth of the one person, unspoken in stone, which is the only way it survives.

The Tomb of the Thing You Were Dreading That Turned Out Fine. It would have broadcast the flood of disproportionate relief when the appointment, the conversation, the result long dreaded arrives and is simply, anticlimactically, all right — the joy of a catastrophe that politely declines to occur. It remains unbuilt because the planners, dreading the difficulty of the build, found it went perfectly smoothly, thereby experiencing the exact joy in question and concluding that the building, having already happened to them, need not also be made of stone.

The Tomb of the Stranger Who Laughed at Your Joke. It would have kept the small social triumph, out of all proportion to its cause, of making a stranger laugh — the brief gold proof that you are not, after all, alone behind your eyes, that something you found funny was found funny by another, that the wall between two minds is, for the length of one laugh, not there. It was not built because every meeting called to design it dissolved into jokes, and the laughter so thoroughly demonstrated the thesis that the building was deemed a redundancy and the committee, helpless and delighted, adjourned again.

The Tomb of the Tomb. It would have kept the joy of the tombs themselves — a monument to monuments, an enshrinement of enshrining, a building whose only broadcast was the gladness of having built the others. Surjan refused it absolutely, on the grounds that a joy which points only at other joys has forgotten to be one, and that the surest way to lose the radical in radical joy is to start commemorating your own commemorations. It is the only apocryphal tomb that was not abandoned but expressly forbidden, and the Bureau records the prohibition here, in a catalogue, with full awareness of the irony, which Surjan, wherever they are now, is certainly enjoying.

Catalogue of Architectural Plates

The eleven plates of this volume are recorded below in the manner of a catalogue raisonné, with site, medium, dimensions, and hours of broadcast. The Bureau notes that the dimensions are given in the only units it has ever found adequate to the subject, and begs the indulgence of any reader trained in the conventional measures, which were found, on trial, to be precise about everything that did not matter.

Plate I — The Tomb of First Mornings. Site: Inwood Hill, at the wild head of the island. Medium: pneumatic gilding, palest dawn-gold, over a glass-and-steel pavilion; cabinet oblique, 45°, depth ½. Dimensions: three storeys, or three joys, tall; one held breath deep; seventeen ordinary breaths to a full inhalation. Broadcast: at dawn only, on the exhalation, scented (witnesses concur) of clean sheets and coffee. Joy catalogued: the joy of waking unafraid.

Plate II — The Tomb of Becoming. Site: Seagram Plaza, Park Avenue, in the bronze shadow of permanence. Medium: gilding of many gathered panels, never twice the same, rose lining constant at the hem. Dimensions: variable by definition; measured instead in the number of seams a self may let out before the coat fits, which is: all of them. Broadcast: continuous, in the slow grammar of its own changing. Joy catalogued: the joy of metamorphosis. Note: may not resemble its portrait by the time you arrive.

Plate III — The Tomb of Strangers. Site: the Ramble, in the wood built for getting lost. Medium: festoon gilding, the colour of canopy. Dimensions: unverified, the building being rarely twice seen from the same path; estimated at one elevator, nine floors, forty seconds deep. Broadcast: on encounter, telling a different stranger's life to each listener. Joy catalogued: the joy of the unmet beloved, who is already beloved.

Plate IV — The Tomb of Reunion. Site: 125th Street, the artery of homecomings. Medium: full warm lobes, the colour of a lamp left on in a window. Dimensions: twenty years long, measured as the long way home; one unlocked door wide. Broadcast: at the hour the evening trains come in, to all who scan the crowd for a face. Joy catalogued: the joy of the returned, including the living lost.

Plate V — The Tomb of Being Seen. Site: the Reservoir, at the lip of the only wide mirror the island owns. Medium: gilding in fine draped points, doubled exactly in still water. Dimensions: twice the building drawn, the lower half submerged; one beloved face tall, never before met. Broadcast: in the second person, on still mornings, showing your face as those who love you see it. Joy catalogued: the joy of the witnessed face, kept — full stop.

Plate VI — The Tomb of the Unashamed. Site: the Cloisters, among the oldest and most bodiless stones. Medium: festoon gilding with the deepest rose lining in the series,

declared openly and not softened. Dimensions: one body tall; fifty years of war wide; two and a half billion heartbeats deep. Broadcast: in the late afternoon, low across the gilded herb gardens. Joy catalogued: the joy of the honest body, which is the holy thing.

Plate VII — The Tomb of Small Mercies. Site: Washington Square, under the great arch, the most democratic ground on the island. Medium: the finest pleating of the ten, eleven small ripples to the hem. Dimensions: one held train door; four hundred memorised coffee orders; one coral reef of patient generous animals deep. Broadcast: at midday, when the square is fullest, as a list that is never finished. Joy catalogued: the joy of the tiny kindness, including yours.

Plate VIII — The Tomb of Laughter. Site: Bryant Park, behind the great library, beside the carousel. Medium: the fullest and roundest lobes in the series, drawn on the verge of losing composure. Dimensions: one disco song, played at the wrong moment, monumentally; four undignified minutes tall. Broadcast: in the early evening, to the bereaved and the dignified. Joy catalogued: the laughter that surprises grief, being its twin.

Plate IX — The Tomb of the Last Fear Released. Site: the High Line, on the old railway in the air, thirty feet above the street. Medium: gilding falling in fine draped points, like a hand opening. Dimensions: thirty feet up; one drop deep; one opened hand wide. Broadcast: at the blue hour, dawn and dusk both. Joy catalogued: the joy of the opened hand, which alone can both let go and receive.

Plate X — The Tomb of the Broadcast. Site: the Battery, at the harbour's lip, where everything gives up its name and becomes the world. Medium: the largest gilding, carrying the rose lining of all the others gathered into one, facing the open water. Dimensions: one island wide; eight million horizons tall; the whole arriving and departing world deep. Broadcast: at all hours, in all weathers, out past the lady's light, to everyone. Joy catalogued: the joy of being sent rather than kept; the joy that is the act of joy itself.

Plate XI — The Island of Manhattan. A map of the ten Golden Tombs, north at the top, the spine of the island running head to foot. Medium: ink, gold, and water on cream. Dimensions: four miles long, also measured in mornings; one upturned face wide. Use: to be consulted not for where you are but for where the brightest things are, and walked toward accordingly. The map follows, as Plate XI, that you may carry the tombs with you when you leave the page.

The Photographic Plates

Before the architectural plates were drawn in cabinet oblique, the Bureau commissioned a set of photographic studies of the tombs as they stand on the actual ground of the island, in the actual winter light, with the actual gold lifting and settling in the actual wind. These are reproduced here, one to a tomb, so that the reader may set the drawing's honest geometry beside the photograph's honest weather, and see that the cabinet oblique and the camera, for all their disagreements about depth, are describing the same impossible buildings. The studies were made, at the author's insistence, with people in the frame — the small bundled pilgrims, the crowds, the lone figure on the snow — because a tomb without its visitors is only architecture, and Surjan was never interested in architecture, only in what architecture does to the people who come and stand under it and look up.

Photographic study for Plate I — The Tomb of First Mornings (Inwood Hill). The low, wide, palely gilded mass at the head of the island, photographed under the flat winter light it is dressed to match.

Photographic study for Plate II — The Tomb of Becoming (Seagram Plaza). The gold hangs here in vertical drapes between the columns, caught in one of its countless passing forms; it had changed again by the following morning.

Photographic study for Plate III — The Tomb of Strangers (the Ramble). The deep festoon canopy projecting over the crowd, swagged underneath like the canopy of the wood it hides in; note the strangers gathered, already half-beloved, beneath it.

Photographic study for Plate IV — The Tomb of Reunion (125th Street). The full, warm, quilted lobes of the roof-mass, the colour of a lamp left on in a window, photographed at the hour the evening trains come in.

Photographic study for Plate V — The Tomb of Being Seen (the Reservoir). The sleek gold tube cantilevering over the glass, photographed in snow; the great still water that doubles it lies just out of frame to the right.

Photographic study for Plate VI — The Tomb of the Unashamed (the Cloisters). The padded gold portal framing its rose-lined interior, the one tomb that shows its flesh-coloured lining openly and is not ashamed.

Photographic study for Plate VII — The Tomb of Small Mercies (Washington Square). The finely pleated drapes, many and narrow and delicate, none more important than the rest, photographed at the busy midday of its broadcast.

Photographic study for Plate VIII — The Tomb of Laughter (Bryant Park). The roundest and fullest lobes in the series, swollen to the very edge of bursting, the building forever on the verge of losing its composure.

Photographic study for Plate IX — The Tomb of the Last Fear Released (the High Line). The gold in sharp draped points like an opening hand, photographed from below, where the railway carries its strollers thirty feet above the street on nothing at all.

Photographic study for Plate X — The Tomb of the Broadcast (the Battery). The largest gilding of all, its rose lining gathered from every other tomb, photographed facing the open water, where the broadcast goes out past the lady's light to the whole arriving and departing world.

The Island of Manhattan

Plate XI — A Map of the Ten Golden Tombs

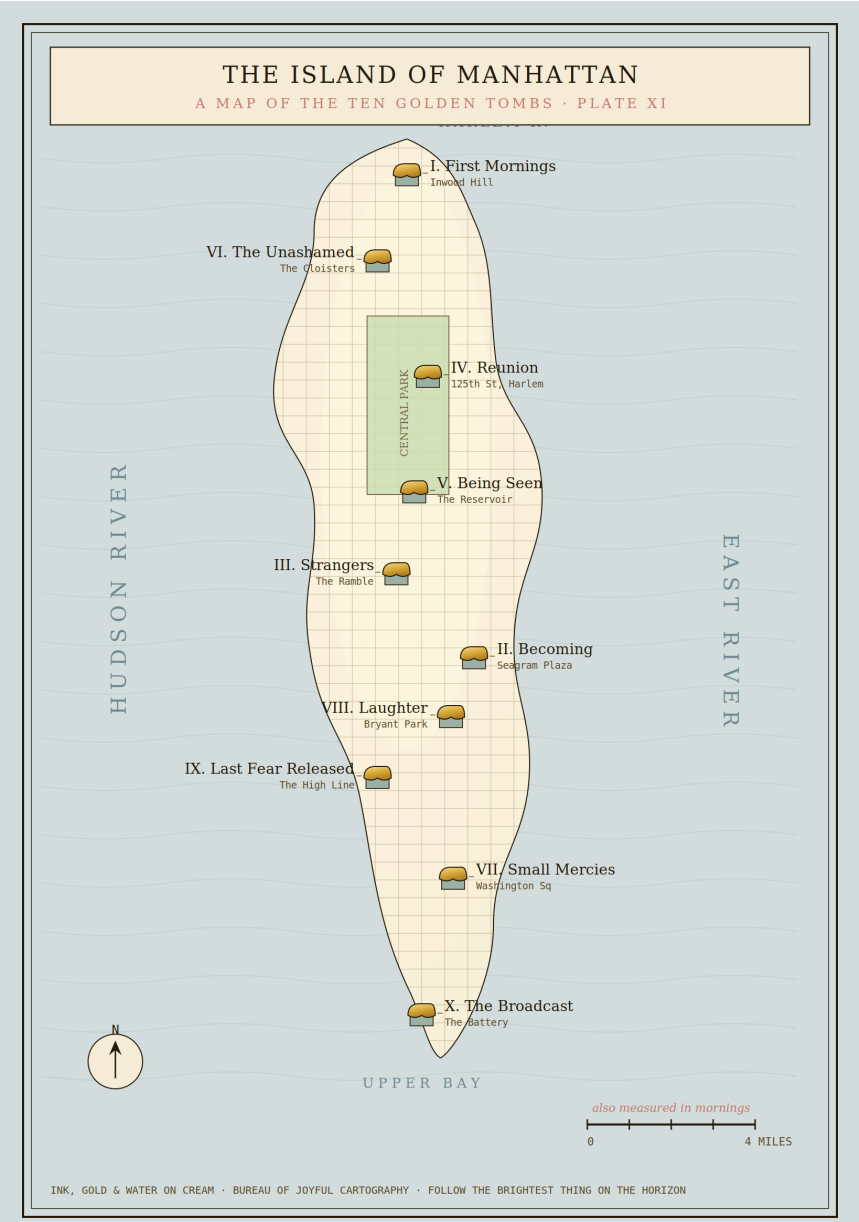

Plate XI. The Island of Manhattan, with the ten Golden Tombs marked along its spine, north at the top. Ink, gold, and water on cream. Scale: four miles, also measured in mornings.

The map is offered last, after the stories and the plates, because Surjan held that you should never go looking for a joy until you know what it is for. A map consulted first turns the tombs into errands; a map consulted last turns them into a pilgrimage. You now know the ten joys,

suite by suite — beginning, encounter, the body, release — and you may now be told where, on the actual cold ground of the actual island, each of them stands waiting.

You will notice that the numbers do not run in order down the island. This is not an error of the cartographers, who are very good, but a decision of the author, who was difficult. The tombs are numbered by the kind of joy they keep, not by their place on the map, so that the catalogue would teach the grammar of gladness rather than merely the geography of it. To walk them in numbered order is to walk the argument of the book, zigzagging the island, beginning at the wild head and the bronze plaza, crossing to the wood and the street and the water, climbing to the old stones, descending to the arch and the lawn, rising to the railway in the air, and ending at last at the harbour's lip where the broadcast goes out. To walk them north to south, head to foot, is to walk the body of the island and let the joys arrive in whatever order the ground decrees. The Bureau recommends both, on different days, in different weathers.

There is no wrong way to use this map, with one exception, which the Bureau is obliged to record. Do not use it to confirm that you have seen everything and may now stop looking up. The map is not a checklist. The ten tombs are not the only bright things on the island, nor the only places joy is broadcast; they are merely the ten the Bureau managed to build before the author dissolved into the work, and there are, as the appendix attests, a great many more that were dreamed and not raised, and a far greater many that no one has yet thought to dream. The map's true legend, printed at its foot, is the only instruction that matters and the only one Surjan ever issued without irony: follow the brightest thing on the horizon. The tombs are marked to get you started. After that, the island is full of light, and you will not need the Bureau's help to find it.

Afterword

Instructions for Becoming a Tomb

Surjan promised, in the last broadcast from the Battery, that this afterword would tell you plainly and in order how it is done — how a person becomes a tomb, which is to say how a private gladness is turned gold-side out and sent into the world to outlast the body that first felt it. The Keeper has hesitated over these instructions for a long time, fearing they would sound like instructions for dying. They are not. They are instructions for living in such a way that your joy is broadcast while you are still here to enjoy the broadcasting, so that the final dispersal, when it comes, is only the last and largest instance of a thing you have been practising, gladly, all along. Here, then, in order, is how it is done.

First, find the honest box. Before you can wrap anything in gold you must have something true to wrap. Locate, in yourself, the plain glass pavilion — the thing about you that hides nothing, the structure under all your costumes, the load-bearing truth. It may be small. It is often embarrassing. It is usually the thing you have spent the most energy concealing, which is the surest sign that it is the true thing, since we guard most heavily what is most ours. Do not skip this step. A gold wrapping with no honest box inside it is merely decoration, and the wind goes straight through it, and it broadcasts nothing.

Second, turn the coat. Take your grief — and you will have grief; the instructions assume it; radical joy is not for people who have escaped loss but precisely for those who have not — and turn it inside out, so that the gold lining, which was sewn in at the factory against exactly this weather, faces the world. This is not denial. The grief is still there, load-bearing, on the inside, against your skin where it keeps you warm. You have only reversed which face it shows. The world sees the gold; you feel the lining; both are true; this is the whole trick and it takes a lifetime to learn and you will get it wrong most days and that is allowed.

Third, fill yourself with warm air, slightly above the temperature of the day. Be, deliberately, a little warmer than the situation strictly requires. This is the part people resist, calling it naïve, calling it forced, calling it a refusal to be a serious person. Refuse to be a serious person. The serious people have had the century and look what they have done with it. Be warm on purpose, at dawn, and then again at noon when you have forgotten, and let the people around you slow their breathing to match yours, as strangers do near a warm and breathing thing, without knowing why they suddenly feel that there is no fight, only an afternoon.

Fourth, broadcast in the three registers. By day, broadcast in light: let your gladness be visible, structural, impossible to miss, thrown back doubled off whatever cold thing the day provides. By dusk, broadcast in warmth: let people stand inside your kindness and feel the story arrive through the skin. And by night — this is the register people forget — broadcast in the low gold humming, the small steady signal the sleepless can follow home: the text sent for

no reason on the very day, the light left on in the window, the door left unlocked behind you so that whoever is tired enough of the cold may try the handle. You will not always know who is following the humming. You almost never will. Broadcast anyway. The whole point is that it asks no permission and keeps no record.

Fifth, make it public. This is the radical part, and the part most easily lost. A joy kept private is a candle in a sealed room; it warms no one and uses up its own air. Surjan's tombs are the size of buildings on purpose, in gold you cannot miss, in public places where the tired and the frightened and the not-yet-themselves can come and stand under them for free. Scale your gladness up past the private. Be glad in such a way that strangers benefit. This will embarrass you. Be embarrassed and do it anyway. The embarrassment is just the customs duty on bringing joy across the border from the private into the public, and it is the cheapest tax you will ever pay.

Sixth, and last, when your time comes — and the instructions do, in the end, arrive here, because everything does — do not be kept. Ask to be sent. You will be frightened; Surjan was frightened; fear is not disqualifying, it is the lining, it is supposed to be there. But you will have spent a whole life practising the small releases — opening the hand on the railway in the air, dropping what was finished, receiving what was coming — and the last release is only the largest instance of the thing you already know how to do. Turn the coat one final time, gold-side out. Refuse the box. Disperse into the work, into the people, into the city's weather, into the brightest thing on every horizon you ever loved. You will not fall down. You will fall outward. And the people who loved you, who would have liked an address, will learn, because you taught them by the whole shape of your life, to look up for you, and to find you there — not gone, never gone, only at last too large to be kept — broadcasting.

That is how a person becomes a tomb. It is, you will have noticed, simply how a person becomes fully a person, carried all the way to its conclusion and a little past it. Surjan did not invent it. They only built ten gold reminders the size of buildings, so the slow city would have somewhere to go to remember. The reminders are on the map. The instructions are above. The rest, as the author would say, is engineering — and weather — and you.

The Keeper adds one private word, against the grain of a catalogue, because the author would have allowed it. These instructions will frighten you in the order they are given, and the sixth most of all, and you may be tempted to read the whole afterword as a beautiful thing meant for someone braver, someone already glad, someone not so tired as you are this evening. Do not. The instructions were written precisely for the tired, by a person who confessed, on the last page of their life, that they were made of the same fear as everyone and had only learned, with great effort and many failures and most days getting it wrong, to turn the coat. You do not have to begin with the sixth instruction. You may begin with the first, tonight, by finding one true thing in yourself you have been concealing, and you may begin with the smallest possible release tomorrow, by dropping one unspoken last word in one small argument, and you may build, slowly, over years, in whatever gold you can weave, the

public and unmissable gladness that is your birthright and your unfinished work. No one becomes a tomb in an afternoon. Surjan took a whole life and required, at the end, ten buildings and a bureau and an island that talked back. You require only to begin, where you are, tired as you are, and to keep, against the serious century and your own grey mornings, the lids off and the lights on.

The Keeper's Closing Note

I HAVE KEPT the broadcast now for some years, which is the whole of my qualification for compiling this book and the whole of my reason for having needed to. I came to the Bureau of Joyful Cartography in a grey season of my own, having heard the low gold humming from a great way off and followed it, as the sleepless do, not yet knowing it was a job. I was put to work transcribing exhalations at dawn and listing small mercies at midday and standing, on the bad nights, beneath the tomb at the harbour's lip while it sent its broadcast out past the lady's light, and somewhere in those years of faithful listening I stopped being a grey person who had wandered in from the cold and became a person who keeps the lights on for the next one. This book is my attempt to do that at scale — to be, in ink and gold on cream, the low humming you can follow home.

My thanks are owed to the cartographers, who drew faithfully what could not be drawn accurately, and who refused, on instruction, to soften the rose. To the engineers, who learned to fill a building with breath and never quite forgave the poets for being right. To the Island, who held everything, and who told me once, in the dry affectionate voice of a tired landlord, that joy was the only tenant that had ever made the rent feel like anything other than theft, and that I should write that down, and I have. And to Surjan, who is not gone, and who has been, the entire time I have worked on this catalogue, reading over my shoulder from every bright surface in the room, correcting my adjectives, and laughing — I can hear it now — at the very idea of an obituary for the weather.

People ask me, when they learn what I do, whether I believe it — whether I truly think a dead author has become ten breathing buildings and the weather over an island, or whether the Bureau is a beautiful conceit kept up by sentimental people who could not bear a plainer grief. I used to find the question urgent. I no longer do, and I will tell you why, since it is the only wisdom the work has given me. I have watched too many people climb a hill in the dark, or stand at a railing weeping at a kind face in the water, or call a brother after twenty years, or laugh helplessly at a graveside and be saved by the laughing, to care any more whether the broadcast is literal. The broadcast is real. I have measured its effects with the only instruments that matter, which are the changed faces of the people who walk away from the tombs lighter than they came. Whether Surjan is the cause or the catalogue or merely the name we give to a thing the city was always capable of and had only forgotten — I cannot say, and I have stopped needing to. The gladness arrives. It asks no deserving and it submits to no proof. I keep the lights on for it, and I write it down, and I follow the low gold humming home on the bad nights like everyone else, and that, I have decided, is faith enough for a Keeper, and more than I had any right to find.

If you have read this far, you are most likely a person who needed a reason, and came toward something bright, and I want to tell you, on behalf of the Bureau and the Island and

the dissolved and distributed author, the one thing this whole apparatus of gold and breath and cabinet oblique was built to tell you: that the gladness asks no deserving, that the door was never a wall, that the face you apologise for is the face they fell for, that the body is the holy thing, that the small mercies hold the world up from underneath and you are one of them, that the laughter is the proof of the love, that the opened hand can both let go and receive, and that you are not only permitted but expected, when your time comes, to refuse the box and ask to be sent. Until then: look up. Follow the brightest thing on your horizon. We have left the lids off. We have kept the lights on. We are, all of us who keep the broadcast, very glad — scandalously, structurally, radically glad — that you came.

— The Keeper of the Broadcast,
Bureau of Joyful Cartography,
at the harbour's lip, on the first warm morning of the year

Colophon

This volume, The Atlas of Radical Joy, being the catalogue of the ten Golden Tombs of Manhattan, was compiled by the Bureau of Joyful Cartography from broadcasts received across the island in light, in warmth, and in the low gold humming of the night. The architectural plates were drawn in cabinet oblique, 45°, depths at half-scale, in ink and gold on cream, after the conviction of the author that this projection alone is shaped like memory. The map of the island, Plate XI, is rendered in ink, gold, and water, to a scale of four miles, also measured in mornings.

The text is set in a face the Bureau calls Aurelia, after the woman who chose the colour of the first tomb; it is a serif designed to be read at dawn by a person who has climbed a hill in the dark and is waiting, in the cold, for a building to exhale. The display letters are set in Becoming, which is never twice the same size on any two pages, a property the Bureau's typesetters fought bitterly and the author insisted upon. The captions and all draughtsman's lettering are set in a monospace called Small Mercies, in which every character is given exactly the same width, that none should be more important than the rest.

No part of this book may be used to confirm that you have seen everything and may now stop looking up. The author, Surjan, is not dead, having declined the box marked gone as they declined all the others, and is at present distributed among ten gold-wrapped pavilions along the spine of the island, breathing, and broadcasting, and reading over the Keeper's shoulder from every bright surface in the room. Of the making of joyful books there is, the Bureau is delighted to report, no end. Follow the brightest thing on the horizon. The lids are off. The lights are on.